KOREAN MUSIC

edited by

Young-Key Kim Renaud
R. Richard Grinker
Kirk W. Larsen

Sigur Center Asia Paper Number 16

SIGUR CENTER FOR ASIAN STUDIES

THE ELLIOTT SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
The Sigur Center for Asian Studies is a policy-focused scholarly institution that serves the community of Asianists at George Washington University and in the nation’s capital, as well as maintaining wide-ranging ties with Asia specialists and officials in Asia, Europe, and North America.

Asia Papers are a series of occasional publications written by visiting scholars and others affiliated with The Sigur Center for Asian Studies. Their aim is to provide background and depth to understanding issues of current public and policy concern in Asian affairs and U.S.-Asian relations. The content and views expressed are solely those of the authors.

**Sigur Center Asia Papers**

1. International Relations in Asia: Culture, Nation, and State  
   Lucian W. Pye (1998)
2. Is China Unstable? Assessing the Factors  
   Available through M.E. Sharpe (1998)  
   David Shambaugh (ed.)
3. The Redefinition of the U.S.-Japan Security Alliance and Its Implications for China  
   Xu Heiming (1998)
4. Enhancing Sino-American Military Relations  
   David Shambaugh (1998)
5. Southeast Asian Countries’ Perceptions of China’s Military Modernization  
   Koong Pai Ching (1999)
6. U.S.-Japan Relations in an Era of Globalization  
   Mike M. Mochizuki (1999)
7. Trends in China Watching: Observing the PRC at 50  
   Bruce Dickson (ed.) (1999)
8. Creation and Re-creation: Modern Korean Fiction and Its Translation  
9. The International Relations Theoretical Discourse in China: A Preliminary Analysis  
   Ren Xiao (2000)
    (2000)
11. The Political Economy of the Asian Financial Crisis  
    Stephan Haggard (2001)
12. Christianity in Korea  
    Young-Key Kim-Renaud and R. Richard Grinker (eds.) (2001)
13. Reflections on “Misunderstanding” China  
    Allen S. Whiting (2001)
14. Assessing Chen Shui-bian’s First Year: The Domestic & International Agenda  
    (2001)
15. European and American Approaches Toward China: Different Beds, Same Dreams?  
    David Shambaugh (2002)
16. Korean Music  

*Single issues of The Sigur Center Asia Papers are complimentary; $5.00 for each additional copy.*

The Sigur Center for Asian Studies  
2013 G Street, NW, Suite 301  
Washington, D.C. 20052  
Phone: 202-994-5886 Fax: 202-994-6096  
http://www.gwu.edu/~sasar/
Contents

Background: ........................................................................................................... i

Acknowledgments: ................................................................................................... i

Preface .................................................................................................................. ii

Opening Remarks .................................................................................................. 1
  Han Joon-yeob

Lectures

Music, Measurements, Pitch Survivals, and Bell Shapes in Korea ...................... 5
  Robert C. Provine

Korean Music and Its Chinese Influences ............................................................... 13
  Byung-ki Hwang

Commentaries

Imagining the Inner Dimensions: A Perspective on the Sino-Korean Musical Exchange...... 19
  Chan E. Park

Wax Philosophical: Re-writing the History of Chinese Musical Influences in Korea .......... 27
  Andrew P. Killick

Musings on Origins and Identities: Responses to Provine and Hwang ..................... 33
  Elizabeth D. Tolbert

Profiles ............................................................................................................... 37

Glossary ............................................................................................................... 41
BACKGROUND:

The HMS Colloquium in the Korean Humanities Series at the George Washington University provides a forum for academic discussion of Korean arts, history, language, literature, thought and religious systems in the context of East Asia and the world. The Colloquium series is made possible by an endowment established by the estate of Hahn Moo-Sook, one of Korea’s most honored writers, in order to uphold her spirit of openness, curiosity, and education. This year’s colloquium is co-sponsored by GW’s Sigur Center for Asian Studies and the Korean Cultural Service, Washington, DC.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

The Conveners of the Hahn Moo-Sook Colloquium in the Korean Humanities express their heartfelt thanks to the presenters and the other participants of the 2001 HMS Colloquium, and the following organizations and individuals for their material and spiritual support:

The Sigur Center for Asian Studies, GWU
The Korean Cultural Service, Korean Embassy
Yordanos Bahar, GWU
Benjamin Diliberto, GWU
Catarina Kim, GWU
Chang Young Kim, the Korean Cultural Service
Ho Jung Kim, GWU
Ki-tae Kim, GWU and Georgetown University
Mike Mochizuki, Director of the Sigur Center for Asian Studies, GWU
Rose-Marie Myalil, GWU
Chul Young Park, GWU
Park Yongman, the Korean Cultural Service
Gregory Shook, the Korean Cultural Service
Ikuko Turner, the Sigur Center for Asian Studies, GWU
Keyei Chul Wi, the Korean Cultural Service
Sung Chul Yang, the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to the United States

Our very special thanks go to:

Deborah Toy of the Sigur Center, for her collegial and professional help from designing the program and other colloquium-related materials to producing the monograph.
Music is an ubiquitous facet of all human societies and cultures. Yet as anyone who has been on either end of a parent-teenager “turn that noise down” conversation can attest, judgments concerning the quality, aesthetic or otherwise, of music are always intensely subjective and personal. The presenters and commentators at the 8th annual Hahn Moo-Sook (HMS) Colloquium in the Korean Humanities explore the intersection between musicians and the sounds they make, on the one hand, and the cultures that produce and listen to them, on the other. What do Koreans hear when they listen to “traditional” Korean music? Whether it is the bells of Confucian ritual music (aak), the strings of the kayagum, or the voices of ch’angguk, the answer depends on who is doing the listening.

As Minister Han Joon-Yeob notes in his opening remarks to this conference, Koreans like to say they are a musical people and, he states, that their music reflects the perseverance of the Korean people in the face of many hardships throughout history—their struggles and their achievements. The visibility of many successful Korean performers and composers on the Western concert and opera circuits in recent decades testifies to that claim. Even in a serious Korean meeting, after-dinner singing can be more common than after-dinner speeches. Korean music is richly distinctive and varied and it has a recorded history that reaches over millennia, boasting, for example, the earliest notational system in East Asia to give a precise indication of rhythm. In Korea as in all East Asia, good music has long been considered essential for enhancing moral character and preserving the social order. Each echelon of the society—court, literati, Buddhist monastic, shaman ritual, agricultural and other folk ceremonial—has appreciated distinctive musical compositions and instrumentation. As in almost all aspects of Korean culture, Korean music reflects active engagement with surrounding nations but demonstrates unmistakably Korean creativity and innovation.

In times past, particularly during the Choson period (1392-1910), Confucian literati emphasized the relationship between Korean musical instruments, forms, and styles of court music and Chinese antecedents. Association with what was widely regarded by the aristocratic class as the origin and center of civilization could only enhance the prestige and transformational capacities of Korean music. Even in cases where the links to actual Chinese practices, particularly ancient ones, were tenuous at best, Korean musicians often went to great lengths to establish continuity between their instruments, forms, and principles of measurement and those thought to have been in China previously. Professor Robert Provine’s paper uncovers the tortured route by which this process took place in the context of Confucian ritual music (aak). Korean musicians strove to remain true to what they perceived as authoritative Chinese standards even when such standards were based on such arbitrary elements as the length of three fingers of a twelfth-century Chinese emperor.
Professor Byung-ki Hwang takes a more general approach to the issue of Chinese influence on Korean music. While his examination of the broad sweep of cultural interaction and exchange finds many areas of similarity between Chinese instruments and styles and their Korean counterparts, Hwang concludes that often what emerged was a “distinctive Korean musical culture that is quite different from the music of China.” Korean musicians and their audiences were surely affected by China, but the “instruments, melodies, rhythms, and actual sounds of the music were original Korean creations, almost uninfluenced by Chinese music.”

Professors Chan E. Park, Andrew P. Killick, and Elizabeth D. Tolbert offer a multi-faceted commentary on the papers from a variety of perspectives ranging from that of ethnomusicologists to performers. One common thread that unifies many of their comments is the complex relationship between music production and reception and the importance of current perceptions in the formulation of narratives about music’s past. In the case of Korea, how the historical relationship between Korean and Chinese music is articulated and understood is, at least in part, a function of (in the words of Killick) “changes in the perception of Korea’s place in the world and especially its relationship with China.”

However, current understandings of Korean traditional music exceed both geographical proximity and historical continuity; indeed, Korean traditional music is now performed throughout the world in striking and previously unimaginable contexts. For example, Chan E. Park is a Korean folklorist teaching at an American University who also performs P’ansori for Korean and non-Korean audiences, in both Korea and abroad, and highlights the complexity of her multiple identities in her discussions of ‘authenticity’ in Korean music.

Tolbert, applying current ethnomusicological perspectives on identity and history, notes that ethnomusicologists of Korean music, both Korean and non-Korean, are beginning to consult with one another in unprecedented ways, engaging in intercultural conversations that demand critical re-evaluations of taken-for-granted ‘facts.’ For whom is it important that Korean music have this or that historical origin? How is traditional Korean music valued differently among various generations of Koreans and non-Koreans, both in Korea and abroad? Who is qualified to speak for Korean music? What is the role of Korean traditional music in promoting a national identity and national, yet non-traditional, musics? Although the terms of the discussion are in flux, it is clear that a new view of Korean traditional music is emerging, one that pays homage to the past yet has an immediacy for current understandings of what Korean traditional music is and its place in the global musical landscape. We need only to look at the papers that follow to observe a particular strand of this conversation; the ways in which the discussants overlap, contest, contradict, and reinforce each other show us contemporary ‘Korean traditional music’ in the making.

The more the presenters and commentators seek to situate Korean music in its cultural context, the more intricate, fascinating, and intriguing the subject becomes and we heed Minister Han’s warning not to take music for granted. It becomes clear that our understanding of music is as fluid and contingent as music itself.

Happy listening!
OPENING REMARKS

Han Joon-yeob
Minister for Public Affairs, the Embassy of the Republic of Korea
Director of Korean Cultural Service, Washington, DC

Dr. Kim-Renaud, Dr. Larsen, Dr. Grinker, eminent musicologists-professors Robert Provine from the U.S. and professor Hwang Byung-ki from Korea, and the three prominent discussants, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

It is a great honor and pleasure to have all of you here this wonderful autumn morning. For me personally, it is also a great privilege to co-host The George Washington University’s 2001 Hahn Moo-Sook Colloquium in the Korean Humanities. Why? The reason is that as some of you may know, my family name, ‘Han,’ is the same as the family name, ‘Hahn’ of the late Hahn Moo-Sook, a major literary figure in Korea. Hence, I want to pay my respects to the memory of one of my “family members,” whose birthday we will recall on October 25: the distinguished Madam Hahn Moo-Sook. Hahn Moo-Sook was to Korea what Virginia Woolf was to England or Pearl S. Buck to America. She has many faces in her world of literature. I thoroughly enjoyed reading her many works as I was growing up; she touched my life and her contributions to the humanities continue to influence me.

Second, I want to pay my respects to another leading literary figure in Korea—Hahn Moo-Sook’s beloved sister, Han Mahl-sook. These two sisters, Moo-sook and Mahl-sook, are like Emily and Charlotte Bronte, the two well-known sister-writers from England. Han Mahl-sook is here today with her husband, Hwang Byung-ki, and her niece, Young-Key Kim-Renaud, who has kept alive her mother’s dream of promoting Korean humanities. Thank you for all your interest and support.

The arts provide us with a way to express the feelings of our souls. Music is especially effective and accessible to all. Since September 11th, we all have observed and witnessed music’s power to ease our sense of loss, address our spiritual needs, stir our sense of patriotism, and build a sense of unity. The unforgettable verse on the magical power of music that English dramatist, William Congreve, wrote more than 300 years ago still grips us:

“Music hath charms to soothe a savage breast
To soften rocks, or bend a knotted oak.
I’ve read that things inanimate have moved,
And as with living souls have been inform’d
By magic numbers and persuasive sound.”

Every culture is different, so every culture has its own music. Koreans are music-loving people. Of course, we enjoy professional performances, but we also greatly enjoy singing privately and during social occasions. We have been a musical people
since before the dawn of history. We developed our own indigenous music and also borrowed elements of music from other cultures, such as ancient China, for example, as you will discuss this morning. Our traditional folk music, however, finds its roots in prehistoric antiquity and has enabled every Korean to directly express the joys and difficulties of daily living throughout history.

We Koreans have had a difficult history. Within the past 100 years, for example, our nation has been colonized and, upon liberation, divided. We experienced a brutal war and have lived under the threat of renewed war since 1953, with virtually no hope of communicating with separated family members until recently. In the last thirty-five years, we have made the difficult transition from the agrarian age through the industrial age to becoming an OECD country joining the ranks of the leading nations in the knowledge age. This transition has strongly affected all of our major social institutions, increasing anxiety and stress. I daresay we Koreans have endured as rich and complex a range of experiences as any other country in Asia over the past 50 years. It is said that suffering produces perseverance, perseverance produces character and character produces hope.²

Our suffering has produced perseverance, character, and hope. Our music reflects this experience and appeals to people in other lands, as your interest shows today.

Today, young people in Korea are, not surprisingly, attracted to the excitement of pop-music. Koreans have adapted this music to meet their emotional needs and created a unique form of expression that also appeals to our neighbors and friends through East Asia.

In the modern age, we sometimes take the humanities for granted. This, of course, can produce starving artists. But it is the artists, poets, authors, and musicians who help us define just who we are and point us to who we can become. I thank you for dedicating your precious time and efforts to honor living and deceased artists and to help us better understand our cultural roots.

Finally, I’d like to close my opening remarks by reading to you one passage from Yuwam (‘The Hermitage of Flowing Water’), one of Han Moo-Sook’s great works. I think that her description of the sound of the Kayagüm in this well-known novel will bring us to the theme of today’s colloquium, Korean Music:³

“Kyong sat erect and plucked with her fingertips the strings of the kayagüm whose one end rested on her lap: Sloong tung twang, slip.

The sound of the kayagüm started with a kyemyonjo minor tune that trembled like a human voice sadly supplicating. Each note was disconnected in that slow tune so that an echo followed each twang like the slow tolling of a bell.

Trem, tang zing tungdang.

The kayagüm sound was a throbbing human lamentation. Kyong’s hand flipped around on the strings like a butterfly. The butterfly folded its wings for a brief rest, and then zipped away again. When her left hand touched the twelve goose feet supporting the strings, the sorrow one hundred times the twelve strings penetrated their hearts. A low and elegant voice threaded out off Kyong’s lips:

“Willow becomes a threat,
Bush warbler a loom
To weave out
Nothing but my sorrow
In ninety-three springs.”

The voice stopped, as if the sorrow was too much to be expressed by pleading sighs, and
the kayagum wailed a long note. Finally, Kyong followed up with her soft voice:

"Who says there
Lush leaves offer a green shade
And flowers are in full bloom
At this glorious hour?"

Honghwa sneezed. Tears were streaming down Kyong’s cheeks.

She had learned the tunes as her trade. But she had started to listen to her own wind and stream that she had learned to entertain others with. The wind and the stream was a concept of Oriental music. Wind and stream—they called music wind and stream because they had interpreted it as a phenomenon of nature. That was why in the old days there had existed a zither without strings that could be compared to the fishing rod without a hook cast by the legendary politician of Chou China. But the sound of flowing water and passing wind seldom sufficed one’s heart by the natural sound itself."

I firmly believe this forum will be a great success and wish you good health. Thank you for your attention.

---

**NOTES**


3. Kayagum is a Korean zither made of paulownia wood, with twelve twisted strings of silk fiber supported by movable bridges. The 1,400-year-old instrument is strikingly distinguished from its relatives, the Chinese cheng, the Japanese koto, and the Vietnamese dan tranh, especially in its tone quality.

Many people are familiar with the spectacular set of sixty-five bronze bells excavated in China in 1977. These bells were buried with the Marquis Yi of the small state of Zeng in 433 B.C.E. Less well-known is that such excavations of tombs have been taking place for many centuries in China, for example in 1104 during the (Northern) Song Dynasty (960-1279), when six individual bells were excavated and attributed to an ancient small state with the same name, Song (?-285 B.C.E.), not far from the site that more recently has yielded the Marquis Yi artifacts.

The ritual court music aak performed in Korea today uses sets of bronze bells whose design can be shown to derive ultimately from those six ancient bells excavated in 1104, and the modern Korean aak pitch standard is evidently the same as that of early twelfth-century China. Furthermore, there is a direct link between that aak pitch standard and the official government-decreed standard system of measurements for length and weight that was used in Korea during most of the period from the fifteenth through the nineteenth centuries.

My paper today is an outline of the links between these various elements, and I omit a fair amount of the documentary evidence; this project is also a work in progress, with a great many loose ends yet to be tied up carefully. I have already published bibliographic descriptions of most of the relevant documentary sources and their interrelationships (1988), a study of the state sacrificial rite contexts of aak (1989), an examination of the complex questions of identity involved in the use of Chinese ritual music by the Korean court (1996), and a consideration of issues of authenticity in Korean traditional music (1998). I am concentrating here on the early phase of measurement-setting in the Korean Chosón period (1392-1910), recognizing that a number of alterations occurred later on, notably during the reign of King Yôngjo (1724-76) (on these, see Larsen 1984a, 1984b, and 1988).

The six bells of ancient Song and the new pitch system of the 12th century

The six bells were excavated in 1104 at a site thought to belong to the lands of the ancient state of Song (drawings of the bells may be found in various editions of a Song-dynasty illustrated source, Wang Fu’s Bogutu, an annotated catalogue of the emperor’s bronze collection, written 1123). The drawings of the bells show six similar, but somewhat distinct styles of shape and decoration. They are unified by a consistent set of three bands in each quadrant of the bell (two in front and two in the rear), each quadrant having nine protruding nodes (three
on each band), plus a central vertical strip in which inscriptions were incised, an intricate decoration underneath the banded quadrants, and highly decorative suspension apparatuses at the top. The emperor of the (later) Song at the time of the 1104 excavation, Huizong, felt that the discovery of these bells from an ancient state also called Song was an auspicious sign. In keeping with the Confucian ideal that the high qualities of antiquity should be emulated in the present, he set about re-calibrating the musical system of Song, to include the construction of new sets of tuned bells, bianzhong, modeled on the excavated six ancient individual bells.

In order to do so, however, it was necessary to determine the correct fundamental pitch, huangzhong, for the musical system, the remaining eleven pitches being calculable through a mechanical circle of fifths method. The proper way to do this, according to ancient documentary sources, was to line up grains of a particular type of millet; ninety grains would comprise the length of the pitch pipe for sounding the pitch of huangzhong. The pitch pipe should also have the capacity of 1,200 grains of millet, thereby fixing its volume and diameter (parenthetically—the diameter should theoretically not affect the pitch of the pipe, but it was necessary to set it for other reasons, as will become evident later).

For reasons that are not entirely clear to us today, the emperor’s advisers were unsatisfied with the traditional method of fixing the pitch of huangzhong, and they advocated a different basis for calculation, to which I’ll return when its significance will be clearer. At any rate, they calibrated a pitch, and new sets of tuned bells, bianzhong, were constructed—physically modeled on the six ancient bells, but tuned to the newly determined pitch system. The musical system was given the name Dasheng, or “great brightness,” and indeed this name was inscribed on one of the central vertical strips on all the new bells, of which there were many.

**Exports to Korea (Koryó)**

In 1114 and 1116, Emperor Huizong sent enormous gifts of musical instruments, dance paraphernalia, ritual implements, and musical documents to King Yejong (ruled 1105-22) of Koryó (918-1392). The gifts included a large number of sets of Dasheng bells, and the Koreans quickly set about using the bells in the music of their own state sacrificial rites, along with the other instruments in the great performing ensembles they received from China. These sacrificial rites were of a strongly Confucian nature and based on Chinese models; it would appear that Korea was attempting to elevate her culture by emulating practices of the mother lode of culture. This particular case initiated the Korean aak, ritual court music, tradition which is still alive today. Emperor Huizong, for reasons published elsewhere (Pratt 1976), was hoping to get something from Korea in return for his musical generosity, but he was disappointed.

Back in China, the political and economic situation soon deteriorated badly and quickly. The (Northern) Song were invaded from the northeast by the armies of Jin, a new state that had proclaimed itself in 1115. They sacked the capital of Song in 1127, and the standard history of the Song dynasty, Songshe (1345, over two centuries later), records that all the Dasheng musical instruments, books, and other ritual items were destroyed.

When I read that Songshe account back in the late 1970s, while writing my PhD dissertation, I simply discarded the further history of Dasheng instruments and music in China. I’ve returned to it only recently after learning that, in fact, the standard history is wrong, and that many of the Dasheng bells survived the invasion and the following century and a half of Southern Song, eventually being put to use in the ritual music of the succeeding Jin and Yuan
(1280-1368) dynasties (that is, up to the mid-fourteenth century). In the case of some of the bells, the Jin actually had the inscription Dasheng scraped off and a new one giving the name of their own musical system, Dahe (“great harmony”) incised in its place.

A fair number (about fifteen) of these bells, some inscribed Dasheng and some re-inscribed Dahe, survive today in assorted locations (for example, a slightly damaged one is lodged in the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore, with the inscription Dasheng, and eight well-preserved specimens may be found in the Forbidden City in Beijing). The existence of these actual bells from the early twelfth century allows us to check the accuracy of conclusions from documentary evidence (coming up shortly), and indeed the mutual corroboration is remarkably good.

In the long run, things went no better for the Korean Koryō regime than for the Chinese Northern Song in 1127: it was sacked by invaders, and virtually all the musical instruments and most of the buildings were burnt and destroyed. The two notable exceptions, according to official records, were a set of the Dasheng bells and a corresponding set of stone chimes that an old musician had thrown into a lake, thus preserving them for posterity.

**Reconstruction in Chosŏn**

In 1392, the Korean ruling dynasty changed from Koryō to Chosŏn. With the dynastic change came the need to reconstruct Korea’s official musical system at court, in keeping with ancient Chinese Confucian precepts; the new regime saw itself, and wanted everyone else to see it, as following a Confucian governmental model. Around 1425, a scholar-official named Pak Yŏn (1378-1458), whose biography appears in a recent *yearbook for Traditional Music* (Provine 2000), was given the task of researching and constructing a huangzhong (Korean hwangjong) pitch pipe. Pak first tried out the traditional Chinese method, lining up grains of black millet (kŏsŏ) to create the length of the pitch pipe.

Having the Confucian scholar-official’s respect for the past, Pak was distressed to discover that the pitch resulting from his efforts was different from that of the finely-crafted Dasheng bells that had been in Korea for three centuries and luckily preserved (submerged in a pond) through the sacking of the Koryō capital in 1361. The Song dynasty was viewed in early Chosŏn Korea as the last great Chinese Confucian dynasty, and Pak felt it would be unseemly to ignore the authority of their bell pitches. Pak reasoned that millet grown in Korea wasn’t necessarily the same size as that grown in China, and indeed one could get many different sizes of millet grains even within Korea, depending on where one harvested it and how the local temperature and rainfall conditions had been that year.

Pak Yŏn, therefore, opted for political and philosophical expediency: he made imitation grains of millet from beeswax, of such a size that when he lined them up, created lengths, and made a pitch pipe, the pitch came out exactly the same as the huangzhong on the Chinese Dasheng set (Yi Hyegu 1976: 294). He justified himself by saying that since the grains of millet could in fact be of various sizes, this particular size was one of the possibilities and furthermore had the considerable benefit of corresponding to the historic Song dynasty instruments. To make the length precise and durable, Pak also made a metal hwangjong pitch pipe (Yi Hyegu 1976: 298-300). As it happens, the resulting pitch, in modern Western terms, is approximately C.

From this basic pitch, also modeled on the physical structure of the Chinese Dasheng bells, the
Koreans made new sets of bells, along with many other musical instruments. These fifteenth-century bells were in turn the models for all others constructed during the Chosön period. Some of these later sets of bells survive to the present and are still in use, but I am not aware of any original Dasheng bells still surviving in Korea.

In the great musical treatise of 1493, *Akhak kwebŏm* [Guide to the Study of Music] (5.3b), for example, the depiction of a *bianzhong* (Korean *p'yŏnjong*) is a close copy, right down to the dragon decoration on the top, of the Dasheng bells. Later instruments retain the same appearance.

The documentary history, in other words, indicates that the pitch of the early twelfth-century Dasheng bells of Song has been preserved in Korea right up to the present, and indeed the pitch of modern Korean bells agrees with that of the preserved twelfth-century Dasheng ones, insofar as I’ve been able to check them, providing a nice confirmation and demonstrating the promised points about pitch preservation—C from the early twelfth century to the present—and bell construction—the shape and appearance deriving from bells of the third century B.C.E. or earlier—as promised at the beginning of this talk.

**Measurements**

The title of this paper also promises information on official governmental standards of measurement. It is important to know about measurements, since they keep cropping up like bad pennies in historical documents, and one needs to know from the text, for example, how tall a wall of a palace was or how much rice an eleventh-century Korean court musician received as monthly salary. Not only did the size of measuring devices vary considerably in different periods and East Asian countries, but also various types of length measurements and measuring devices were used for various purposes. In the Chosön period, for example, the measuring stick *p'obekech'ŏk* was used for measuring cloth, the *choryegich'ŏk* for many ritual items, and so forth. The various measurements were interrelated by precisely set proportions, so that once a single fundamental length had been established, all the others were available by simple computation. Four measuring sticks used in the early Chosön period are depicted (actual size) in a 1474 official document on ritual and ceremonies, the *Kukcho orye sŏrye* [Rubrics for the Five Rites of the Nation] (1.123ab).

As stated in an official document of 1469, *Kyŏngguk taejŏn* [National Code] (6.1b-2a) and repeated elsewhere, the units of measurement were as shown below in the Appendix. The fundamental measuring length from which the others were all derived was called the *hwangjongch'ŏk* (*hwangjong*, loosely translated as “foot”), so the whole problem of establishing a set of length measurements ultimately boiled down to setting the length of the *hwangjongch'ŏk*. This is where the musical connection comes in, since *hwangjong*, as we are now all aware, was the fundamental pitch of the musical system.

The *hwangjongch'ŏk* measurement was derived from the length of the pitch pipe which produced the pitch *hwangjong*. Using the terminology, listed below in the Appendix, in constructing a pitch pipe, one grain of millet was one *p'ui* in length; ten grains were therefore one *ch'on*, and nine of these *ch'on*, ninety grains, set the length for the pitch pipe. The so-called *hwangjongch'ŏk*, or *hwangjong* “foot,” was obtained by adding one further ten-grain *ch'on*, so that the foot contained ten *ch'on* (decimal system). The conversion factors shown in square brackets in the Appendix are taken from the published results of the physicist Pak Hŭngsu (1980), who has
computed both the lengths based on pitch pipes needed to produce the observed pitches and measured actual surviving measuring devices from the Chosŏn period. It would be nice, of course, if these computations agreed with measurements from early twelfth-century China, and they do so reasonably well (but I have yet to investigate the causal connections between pitch and measurement in Northern Song China).

The chart of the official Chosŏn-period measurement system in the Appendix should help readers of all Korean written texts between the fifteenth century and the end of the nineteenth century.

**Where did the Chinese huangzhong pitch come from?**

In conclusion, I must tell you the strange circumstances surrounding the determination of the early twelfth-century Chinese huangzhong pitch. As mentioned earlier, emperor Huizong's advisers proposed an alternative to the traditional method of lining up grains of millet to obtain the pitch pipe length. One of emperor Huizong's advisers, Wei Hanjin, successfully proposed that the determination of the huangzhong pitch pipe for the reign be based not in the traditional way on grains of millet, but on the sum of the lengths of the third, fourth, and fifth fingers on the emperor's left hand (Songshi 128.2998 and 462.13526). Each finger being made of three segments, this constituted nine segments, or roughly the same thing as nine ch' on. In the case of Emperor Huizong, his fingers added up to 31.2 cm, as we can deduce from the reasoning already given above. Wei Hanjin justified his proposal on statement in the ancient dictionary Shuowen that parts of the human body were used as the basis of measurements, which is of course perfectly clear in the case of Western measurements as well (foot, cubit, span, etc.).

I hope that it is clear from this presentation that there was a great deal riding on the determination of a basic pitch in China and Korea—not only the court musical system, but the whole system of measurements of the nation depended on it. Other cultures have placed and do place different, and indeed higher values on musical matters than we in the present-day West tend to do, and in Confucian societies music was of the greatest concern—and in many more ways than I have pointed out today. In East Asian studies, you ignore music at your peril, which is to say that a lot of scholars lead perilous existences.

To summarize: all length measurements in the early Chosŏn period were based on three left-hand fingers of an early twelfth-century Chinese emperor, and to this day those three fingers can still be heard in the fundamental pitch underpinning Korean ritual music, played on tuned bronze bells that in visual tradition, as distinct from oral tradition, retain the appearance of instruments made about two and a half millennia ago.
APPENDIX

Measurements in the Early Chosŏn Dynasty

The system of measurements recorded in the Kyŏngguk taejŏn 經國大典 (1469) 6.1b-2a, and reproduced in the Kukcho orye sórye 國朝五禮序例 (1474) 1.123a-124a and Ch'ungbo Munhŏn pigo 增補文獻備考 (1908) 91.3ab.

[Modern lengths in centimeters are based on the conclusions of Pak Hŭngsu 朴興秀 stated in various publications, such as Pak Hŭngsu 1980.]

Length (度):

[Basic proportional lengths]

10 li 麓 = 1 p'ún 分
10 p'ún = 1 ch'ŏn 寸
10 ch'ŏn = 1 ch'ŏk 尺
10 ch'ŏk = 1 chang 丈

[Measuring sticks]

hwangjongch'ŏk 黃鐘尺 = 1.000 hwangjongch'ŏk [34.7 cm]
chuc'hŏk 周尺 = 0.606 hwangjongch'ŏk [21.0 cm]
yŏngjoch'ŏk 營造尺 = 0.899 hwangjongch'ŏk [31.2 cm]
choryeongch'ŏk 續禮器尺 = 0.823 hwangjongch'ŏk [28.6 cm]
p'obaekch'ŏk 布帛尺 = 1.348 hwangjongch'ŏk [46.8 cm]

Volume (yang 星):

10 ch'ak = 1 hüp 合
10 hüp = 1 sŭng 升
10 sŭng = 1 tu 斗
15 tu = 1 sogok 小斛 (p'yŏngsŏk 平石)
20 tu = 1 taegok 大斛 (chŏnsŏk 全石)

Weight (hyŏng 衡)

The weight of water filling the volume of the hwangjong pitch pipe is 88 pun 分.

10 li 麓 = 1 pun 分
10 pun = 1 chŏn 錢
10 chŏn = 1 nyang 兩
16 nyang = 1 kŭn 斤

A taech'ing 大稱 [scale] has 100 kŭn; a chungch'ing 中稱 has 30 kŭn or 7 kŭn; and a soch'ing 小稱 has 3 kŭn or 1 kŭn.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary sources:

Akhak kwebŏm 樂學軌範 (1493), chapter 6.
Chen Yang 陳暘, Yueshu 樂書 (1103), chapters 96-97.
Chosŏn wangjo sillok 朝鮮王朝實錄, passim.
Chungbo Munhŏn pigo 增補文獻備考 (1908), chapter 91.
Gujin tushu jicheng 古今圖書集成, (1728), chapters 92 and 95.
Jinshi 金史 (1344), chapter 39.
Kukcho orye sŏrye 國朝五禮序例 (1474), 1.113a-114a.
Kyŏngguk taejŏn 於國大典 (1469), 6.1b-2a.
Ruan Yi 阮逸 and Hu Yuan 胡瑗, Huangyou xinyue tuji 皇祐新樂圖記 (1053).
Songshi 宋史 (1345), chapters 128 and 462. Zhonghua shuju 中華書局 ed.
Wang Fu 王黼, Bogutu 博古圖 (1123).

Secondary sources:


__, Toryanghyŏng kwa kugak nonch’ong 度量衡과 國楽論叢. Seoul: Pak Hŭngsu paksu
hwagap kinyŏm nonmunji kankaenghoe 朴興秀博士華甲記念論文集刊行會, 1980.
Yi Hyegu 李惠求. Han’guk ŭmak nonch’ong 韓國音樂論叢. Seoul: Sumundang 秀文堂, 1976, 289-301 (Korean) and 387-402 (English).
KOREAN MUSIC AND ITS CHINESE INFLUENCES

Byung-ki Hwang

Translated by Andrew Killick
Assistant Professor of Musicology
Florida State University

In politics, economics, society, and other fields, but most of all in culture, exchange between neighboring countries has a long and varied history. This has naturally given rise to cultural diffusion, and in speaking of this cultural diffusion we often use the metaphor of flowing water. Culture is said to flow like water from a high place to a low. When we consider that historically culture has generally been diffused from powerful countries to weaker ones, this way of speaking can seem quite persuasive. But the weaker countries have not been content to simply absorb the advanced culture of more powerful neighbors. Rather, they have developed it further to renew their own national culture, and even exported that culture in turn. Thus, cultural diffusion seems a little different from the flow of water descending continuously toward the sea.

Korea has developed its own brilliant culture through thousands of years of history. But like other countries, it has also maintained continual cultural exchange with its neighbors, and has actively adopted advanced culture from outside.

Geographically, Korea is situated at the far east of the Asian continent, with China to the west, Russia to the north, and Japan to the east. It has a long history of cultural exchange with all these neighboring countries, but its relationship with China stands out as particularly significant.

China exerted the greatest influence on the Korean peninsula, not only because of its large land area and population or its abundant natural resources, but also because of its long history and its advanced culture, always a step ahead of its neighbors. Music is no exception, and in discussing Korea's traditional music, we cannot omit the influence of China.

What, then, was this Chinese influence on Korean traditional music? Here I will introduce a few representative examples.

When Korean musicologists study ancient music, many of the sources they consult are Chinese historical works. In the Chinese official histories, the Twenty-Four Chronicles, the nations and peoples of China's neighboring lands in each period are described in some detail, and records are preserved of ancient Korean kingdoms: Ancient Chosón during the Chinese Han dynasty (206 B.C.E.–221 C.E.) and Koguryó, Paekche, and Silla during the Chinese Sui (581–618) and T'ang (618–907) dynasties. Through these fragmentary records, and through other documents and archaeological remains preserved in Korea, we can attain at least a faint
glimpse of the ancient Korean society.

The first of the ancient Korean nations to achieve prosperity was Koguryo. The music of Koguryo is represented by the string instrument *kómun'go*. The three kingdoms that co-existed on the Korean peninsula in that period, Koguryo, Paekche, and Silla, are described in the History of the Three Kingdoms (Sanguk Sagi, 1146), which states that the *kómun'go* was developed by an official named Wang Sanak who “re-made” a seven-string zither sent from Chin-dynasty China (265-420). Even today, the *kómun'go* is one of the most important instruments in Korean traditional music. Yet no instrument resembling the *kómun'go* can be found in China, nor does any Chinese instrument use the unique playing technique of the Korean *kómun'go*, in which a bamboo plectrum called the *sultae* is struck downwards onto strings that are pressed against frets.

Since neither the shape nor the playing technique of the *kómun'go* is found in China, one might conclude that the *kómun'go* is an original creation of Koguryo. But we should not jump too hastily to such a conclusion. The History of the Three Kingdoms is an official history written by Kim Pusik, and when it uses the word “re-made” (*kaejak*), though we cannot be sure of the exact meaning, the implication seems to be that the *kómun'go* was “re-made” on the basis of an existing model. Was the *kómun'go* simply a “re-make” of the seven-string zither from the Chin dynasty?

The *kómun'go* appears frequently in tomb mural paintings from around the 4th century, and is also often mentioned in Chinese literary sources. The *kómun'go* depicted in these paintings is constructed in the same way as the modern one, differing only in the number of strings and frets. Similarly, the Chinese *qin* which appears in many archaeological and literary sources shows relatively little change between ancient and modern forms.

The *qin* and the *kómun'go* have little in common either in their structure or their playing technique except that both are string instruments played in a horizontal position. Thus, setting aside the question of their origin, the two instruments at first glance appear to be quite unrelated.

From an anthropological viewpoint, the origin of the *kómun'go* seems less connected with the Chinese *qin* than with southeast Asian instruments such as the *chakay* of Thailand or the *migyaun* of Myanamar (Burma). These instruments are struck with an implement similar to the *kómun'go*’s *sultae*, and their strings are pressed against frets. Although the music played on them is quite different, their physical resemblance to the Korean *kómun'go* is interesting. What does it mean when a structure and playing technique unknown in China appears in Southeast Asia? One possible interpretation is that the music of Koguryo, as represented by the *kómun'go*, was known beyond the Korean peninsula, beyond even China, in Asia as a whole.

The question remains whether the *kómun'go* was completely unrelated to the Chinese *qin*, contrary to the account given in the History of the Three Kingdoms. I am less concerned with the question whether or not the *kómun'go* was indeed “re-made” from the *qin*, than with the author of the History of the Three Kingdoms, Kim Pusik, and his view of history, his sense of beauty, and his aesthetic ideas concerning the *kómun'go*.

Kim Pusik was a man of Unified Silla which had toppled the Koguryo kingdom with the help of China, and it was in a spirit of “serving the great” (*sadaejutii*) that he wrote his account of the Koguryo, Paekche, and Silla kingdoms. Chinese characters were used for writing in Korea at that time, and there are many passages in his writings that emphasize the relationship with China. From the
viewpoint of a historian who sought to “serve the great” and had studied and absorbed the aesthetics of China, the question whether the kǒmun' go had originally been modeled on the qin might not seem very important. In those days when music was no mere source of pleasure but a governing principle of the country itself, a musical instrument likewise was more than a tool for making sound. The Chinese qin was played not for personal amusement but for the cultivation and edification of the character. This aesthetic concept of the ancient qin has dominated the aesthetics of the Korean ruling class from the time when Kim Pusik wrote the History of the Three Kingdoms right down to modern times: all that changed in Korea was that the kǒmun' go replaced the qin. Thus, from Kim Pusik’s point of view, wherever the kǒmun’ go originally came from, it was to be described in relation to the Chinese qin.

Despite its long history, the deep aesthetic tradition of the qin is now lost in China, while the kǒmun’ go holds a preeminent place among traditional Korean instruments, and continues to be well loved by Koreans. Moreover, those who seek to preserve the ancient aesthetics of the kǒmun’ go still use it as an instrument of self-cultivation.

Korea’s medieval period can be said to extend from the Koryó dynasty (918–1392) to the middle of the Chosón era (1392–1910). The most important musical activities in this period took place in connection with national events centered on the royal court, and among these, especially noteworthy is the importation of Confucian ritual music (aak) from China.

In this medieval period, and especially in the Chosón era, the ruling ideology of the state was Confucianism. Having overthrown the previous dynasty and established a new one, the rulers felt the necessity not only to justify their own revolution and stabilize public sentiment, but also to win the support of their powerful neighbor China. Accordingly, they adopted an ideology that met the needs of the time, the Chinese doctrine of ceremony (yaek). Representing a Confucian view of music, this doctrine of ceremony had been the dominant theory of music in China since the beginning of the Han dynasty (206 B.C.).

The Confucian view of music that this doctrine of ceremony upheld was a heteronomous theory that treated music as a tool for the highest ruler. It sought to use music to elevate public sentiment, improve morality and ethical sense, and edify the people socially and politically. Of course, this Confucian approach was not the only philosophy of music in China; but because it was well suited to an era that respected Confucianism, it exerted a continuous influence on the Korean peninsula over a long period.

Since the nation itself was founded on Confucian philosophy, the national rites that were considered most important in Confucianism used music imported from China’s ancient tradition of ya愉悦 ceremonial music. In Korean, this music is called aak. Thus, Korean aak developed out of music imported from China to meet the needs of the time and the nation. Aak was first introduced in the 12th century during the Koryó dynasty, but its golden age was in the 15th century during the reign of King Sejong (1418–1450), known as Korea’s greatest monarch. In that period, numerous scholars strove to revive the ceremonial music of China’s ancient Zhou dynasty (founded 256 B.C.), and eventually, a new aak was created and performed as a successor to the ancient Chinese tradition. It was a great and laborious work, since no contemporary model was available and many Chinese literary sources had to be consulted. Almost 600 years later, this revived version of ancient Chinese ritual music is still performed unchanged when the rites in honor of Confucius are held twice
a year at the Confucian Temple in Songgyun’gwam University.

What is most important, however, is that the Chinese Confucian philosophy of music exerted a profound influence on Korean court music as a whole. As a result, in modern times the word aak has come to be used in reference to all the music performed at court, including the hyangak repertoire of Korean origin. But while this broad usage of aak seems intended to tie all Korean court music to the Chinese philosophy, the music itself is unique in style and cannot be found in China, the original source of aak. In the traditional music performed today in China, there is nothing resembling Korean court music. True to the musical aesthetics of Confucianism, a music was born that was no less impressive than it was subdued, slow, and simple in form, that was quite unlike Chinese music, or that was at one and the same time the most Chinese and the most un-Chinese of music. What was special about this Korean aak was that it arose from the music of the Korean ruling class outside the court itself. Conceptually, this elite musical tradition had been shaped by Chinese influence, but in its actual sounds—its melodies, rhythms, and tone color—it was an original Korean creation.

Another kind of music, tangak, was imported from China around the same time as aak. This tangak was originally a form of popular vocal music and poetry in Sung-dynasty China (960–1125). For some time after it reached Korea, it was performed in its original form, but eventually it was changed into the completely Koreanized form that is preserved today.

A comparable example might be the world-famous popular music group Buena Vista Social Club, which has absorbed the salsa style that originated in Afro-Cuban music and successfully transformed it into a music all its own. I believe it was a great musical talent and open-minded thinking that enabled the musicians to absorb the powerful rhythms of Africa so naturally.

The importation and Koreanization of Chinese poetry and music is not as simple a process as this group’s music-making, but I believe it was made possible by similar factors: the open-minded willingness to accept a foreign music without resistance, and the musical ability to make that music one’s own.

In this way, while Korean music, or at least the music of the ruling class, was strongly influenced by Chinese music, in the process the imported music was thoroughly Koreanized and acquired a unique character that cannot be found anywhere in China.

In speaking of the Chinese influence on Korean music, the first example I mentioned was an instrument called the komun’go, but many other Korean traditional instruments also have links with China.

My own main instrument is the kayagüm. Accounts of the history of the kayagüm frequently cite Kim Pusik’s work which I mentioned before, the History of the Three Kingdoms, which states that the kayagüm was developed by the ruler of the small Korean kingdom of Kaya (c. 42-562 C.E.) on the model of the Chinese zheng. But in the light of recently discovered archaeological remains as well as existing records, this story too appears to be a politically motivated piece of writing in the spirit of “serving the great.” Admittedly, the string instrument excavated recently in southern Korea does not exactly match the modern form of the kayagüm, so we cannot say that Kim Pusik’s account is definitely wrong, but to my knowledge no instrument corresponding to the zheng and dating from before the Current Era has so far been excavated in China. Only instruments resembling the se and qin have
been found.

The kayagüm was also taken to Japan, where a similar instrument, the koto, still exists. Like the Chinese zheng, the koto has 13 strings, while the Korean kayagüm has 12. The additional string comes in handy in performance. Why, then, has the kayagüm stuck to 12 strings? While many interpretations are possible, the prevailing idea is that the instrument is meant to embody the harmony of heaven and earth, in which a year consists of 12 months. The idea of making a physical object represent cosmic principles is certainly ubiquitous in East Asia. One could also point out that this idea corresponds to the philosophy expressed in one of the Chinese classics, the Book of Changes.

The Korean haegüm is a bowed instrument resembling the Chinese erhu and imported through China from its origins among the nomadic peoples of northern China. However, while the erhu has metal strings that are pressed against a fingerboard, the haegüm has silk strings and produces a variety of effects by pulling the strings with the fingers. Although the two instruments share a common origin, today they differ in construction, tone color, and playing technique. Since the strings of the erhu are pressed lightly, the instrument is agile and well suited to fast pieces, which indeed comprise its main repertoire. The haegüm, on the other hand, produces wide pitch variations on single tones through the pulling action of the left hand, and its special character is more apparent in slow pieces.

The difference between the Chinese dizi flute and the Korean taegum is of the same kind. The music played on the Chinese instrument is generally very fast, technically brilliant, and high in pitch. The Korean instrument, by contrast, is typically played in a low register, with less emphasis on technical brilliance than on the depth and meaning of the music.

This is because the musical philosophy that has come down to us through the centuries from Korea's ruling class remains faithful to the musical philosophy of ancient China. Yet in practice, this philosophy has given rise to a distinctive Korean musical culture that is quite different from the music of China. The very different music of the Chinese qin and the Korean komun’go shows how the music of China and Korea pursued different paths.

So far, we have considered the musical culture of Korea’s ruling class, the social elite that centered on the royal court. Now let us turn to the music performed and enjoyed by what might be called the “ruled class,” the common people.

The music of the common people was primarily vocal music. The general population mainly sang folk songs, while professional singers performed somewhat more complex and musically developed songs. In these songs of the common people, Chinese legends, poems, and historical figures frequently appear.

For example, the popular children’s song “Moon, Moon” (Tara tara) contains the lyric, “Moon, moon, red moon, the moon where Yi T’aeback used to play.” The name Yi T’aeback refers to the famous Chinese poet Li Po. Not only the songs of the professional singers, but those of the general population and even of children, are full of references to China. But the Chinese component is limited to the mention of historical figures or famous literary phrases, while the melodies are purely Korean and quite unrelated to Chinese music.

Thus, the Chinese people, places, events, and expressions that appear in Korean vocal music serve only to elevate the tone and enrich the content of the lyrics, while in the music there is no direct influence from China at all.

It need hardly be said that throughout Korea's
cultural history the influence of China has been strong. But the field that received that influence most directly was the visual. Not only the visual arts such as architecture, handicrafts, and painting, but also poetry and literature (art forms that similarly depend on the visual medium of writing) were profoundly influenced by China both directly and indirectly. Even these visual fields did not simply accept Chinese things, but developed them into something more sophisticated to create a distinctive Korean product.

We could say that in the purely aural field of music, the influence of China was relatively weak, while the original Korean element was correspondingly stronger. In music, Koreans followed the Chinese only in philosophy and general principles, while the instruments, melodies, rhythms, and actual sounds of the music were original Korean creations, almost uninfluenced by Chinese music. This is perhaps why Koreans frequently say that traditional music (kugak) is the spirit of the nation.
IMAGINING THE INNER DIMENSIONS:
A PERSPECTIVE ON THE SINO-KOREAN MUSICAL EXCHANGE

Chan E. Park

What constitutes the music of a state? Is it intrinsic ethnicity, or external influence, or both? Is art ideological or political imposition or an independent entity? How do we negotiate between what experientially ‘is’ and what we epistemically ‘know’ about the past musical exchanges between two nations? What converged and diverged on the contested terrain? Probing these questions in connection with the two papers dedicated to the Han Moo-Sook Colloquium 2001, this essay puts into perspective the question of Chinese influence on Korean music by imagining the inner dimensions of the intercultural traffic often blinded by the politics of international hierarchy.

The history of cultural influence is in essence a history of border-crossing, “creative cultural creolization... where the residents often refuse the geopolitical univocality of the lines.” Today, afforded by the global media and commerce, influences transcend geographic borders and boundaries to the remotest parts of the world, unlike in the ancient eras when unprecedented waves of influence were largely caused by either invasions, subjugations, or accidents, like the expeditions of the Mongols across the Asian continent, Columbus’ discovery of America, or Hamel’s shipwreck off Cheju Island.

Crosscultural exchange confirms the complexity of spatial, temporal, contextual, ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity. In today’s contest for cultural potency, however, an ancient cultural convergence is easily regarded as simple mathematical addition, without due respect for the inevitable cultural divergence that occurs when encountering new people, new lands, new contexts. Obscuring cross-cultural exchanges further is global hierarchy, which in turn implies unequal representation—vividly exemplified in the academia’s investment into ‘selective’ humanity in its curriculum. Regrettably, the assault of global capitalism helps deconstruct traces of the past production, circulation, import and export of cultures. Following World War II, modernization allowed only a single-stranded evolution from “tradition” to “modern”(Fox 1990: 1-2), catalyzing the loss of the kind of national or ethnic traits that characterized individual societies.

Our historical, anthropological, and cross-cultural quests are validated not only by the origins of influence alone, but by emergent localizations of influence as well. Inhibitive of the true dimensions of interculture, the patterning of cultural influence has often been historicized on the basis of geopolitical hierarchy that alters not only the present and the future but also the memories of the past. Though complex, multi-angled, and contingent on specific context, cultural exchange is frequently viewed as a
hopelessly one-way flow from the territorially larger, politically superior, or economically richer to the smaller, weaker, or less prosperous regions. Enforced with such nature-oriented metaphors as the flow of water from the higher ground to the lower, a territorial lesser is assumed a cultural lesser, an inferior vessel fed by a superior Other.

The music of a region shares kinship with the musics of the surrounding regions while exuding an independent personality. Exemplified in the two papers—Provine, highlighting the historicity of the influence, and Hwang, emphasizing the cultural divergence—Chinese musical influence on Korean music is a frequently revisited subject of inquiry. While together they articulate the double-headed truth of the cultural convergence and divergence between China and Korea, I locate my concern in the intercultural discourse itself. Situated in the geographic center of what constitutes East Asia, Korea since the ancient eras has been an important crossroad of the region’s cultural traffic. We have at hand two countries that have intimately shared borders, cultures, languages, and other essential resources while engaged in an imperialistic relationship throughout much of their lengthy coexistence. According to Professor Hwang, Korean music has developed independently with diverging interpretations and ethnic expressions, adding that although culture is said to flow “like water from a high place to low,” the weaker countries “have developed it further to renew their own national culture, and even exported that culture in turn.” Despite his further attempt to clarify that the high against the low are not to be equated with the typical juxtaposition of the politically stronger against the weaker, the analogy itself is problematic, as it presupposes the kinetics of hierarchy between the juxtaposed. The imagery of height inescapably conjures the position of power, of urban cultures flowing to rural areas, center trickling into margin, or the superior benevolently impressing its weight on the inferior. Could the center instead be the central depository of influences from the off-centers, just as a reservoir is the collection of waters from remotest valleys? Has not the quintessential hierarchy been discrediting the marginal inspirations shaping the centers from time immemorial?

Native cultural forms do not just serve hegemony, but compete with it. Ethnic activities, “with their forms that have seemingly passed the test of time, can become commentaries on the “big” issues.” For example, in the 1970s and 1980s in Korea, regional folk cultures resurged and entered the urban performance centers and college campuses as expressions of resistance to the intensifying political oppression. In efforts to change the course of, in Victor Turner’s coinage, the “social drama,” they recruited such ancient stage dramas as masked dance (t’alch’um), farmers band music (p’ungsul), and p’ansori story singing that had been historically marginalized for their “outcast” origins. Ironically, according to the government preservation policy, these performance traditions were also being designated as “Intangible Cultural Assets.” As “archetypal” treasures and as expressions of resistance, they in turn inspired different performative possibilities in the mainstream entertainment sectors, such as the globally featured samulnori percussion, the films Sôp’yônje and Ch’unhyang treating p’ansori and singers of p’ansori as subject matters and have been featured internationally, or the more recent “fusion music” boom that dominates the Korean “traditional music” broadcast hours.

The established orthodoxy holds that many cultural and intellectual trends in Korea were introduced from China; the idea that cultural trends did not stay “Chinese” but became “Korean” on Korean soil, and were in turn introduced to Japan to be Japanese, remains to be contested. Cross-cultural understanding involves the awareness of the
complex reciprocity between the cultures, and the ability to see the present as the continuation of the past. It requires willingness to recognize marginal influences galvanizing new trends, innovations, or adaptations in the centers. To influence the surrounding margins, a center must first be defined by the very margins. For example, consider the formation of American Blues, Jazz, and Rock-n-Roll, first innovated among the marginalized African-Americans from Georgia and other slave states. In the early 1950s, prominent white singers repackaged some of the early Blues tunes like “Hound dog,” the beginning of Rock-n-Roll, but we now know that in the process its African-American roots were obscured and their authorships were usurped by the record companies promoting Elvis and Jerry Lee Lewis among others. The big question is whether the true roots and authorships will be recognized or shelved away in the history of American music several centuries later. Returning to East Asia, what is termed lately as Hallyu, “Korean flow,” is sweeping through the pop entertainment cultures of China, Taiwan, and other Asian nations. It is reported that the mannerisms and styles of Korean singers and actors are zealously emulated, even their facial features, surgically. Have facts of this nature been remembered in history, and will they be remembered centuries later, or will they in conformity with the politics of marginalization be forgotten or usurped?

Geographic or hegemonic boundaries are in constant flux. Pak Shiin poignantly adds:

From the historical sense of time, border is merely a temporary boundary maintained by those happen to possess the current hegemonic power. In the case of Korean history, her border was not a single fixture but varied according to the frequent power shift. The Chinese historical canon beginning with the ancient Shiji consistently locates Korea to the ‘east of the Chinese border,’ (near the present Beijing). The Korean territory in the past included the larger Manchu, but historians have entertained only the territory the last dynasty maintained.1

Listing such sources as Shiijing (Book of Poems), Shiji (Book of History), Hanshu (Chronicle of Han), and Hou-Hanshu (Chronicle of Later Han), Pak further asserts that the history of China began with the Altaic people’s entrance and developed with their continued tidal attacks upon the northern border walls. “In more recent times conquests of China by Kitai or Liao, Jin, Yuan and another Jin renamed Qing were nothing but some of the instances in the long line of repetitions. . . becoming part of that ocean of people which is there now.” 2

With their physical persons, their strands of Altaic cultures had to become part of the Chinese culture. Though his assertion is one of many on the changing Korean territory in connection with the formation of Chinese territory, people, and culture, Pak’s claim provides a realistic dimension to the history of Chinese expansion.

The prerequisite for interdisciplinary probing of the in-between and the invisible in the crosscultural traffic should be the sensitivity to see and hear the suppressed murmurings of the past exchange. In establishing her contribution to the shaping of the neighboring cultures, Korea suffers double jeopardy: the Sino-centered presupposition that all aspects of Korean culture come from China, and the Japanese nationalistic dissociation from her ancient ties with the Korean cultural traditions. The map of East Asia in the 12th century was very different from what we know today: how the borders were drawn, who the peoples were, and what political and cultural relationships the neighboring peoples had. Unfortunately, the prism of today colors the reality of the past. The complexity of cross-culture hides under the dominant, canonical, and simplistic discourses, just as the present map blinds us from centurial or millennial traffic. The fact that academia
in varying degrees reconstructs East Asia as “Japan and China” by marginalizing Korea as the dispensable ‘poor cousin’ further distorts the reality, for Korea continues to serve as a pivotal crossroad of culture.

Music Played in Korea, or Playing Korea?

“All length measurements in the early Chosôn period were based on three left-hand fingers of an early twelfth-century Chinese emperor, and to this day those three fingers can still be heard in the fundamental pitch underpinning Korean ritual music…” (Provine, 2)

In his paper, Provine bases his assertion of the all-pervasive Chinese imperial legacy in the Korean ritual music on three historical factors: Emperor Huizong’s musical gifts to King Yejong of Koryô (918-1392) in 1114 and 1116; the scholar-official Pak Yôn’s (1378-1458) laborious construction of a hwangjong pitch pipe to produce the bell pitches of the Sung China and subsequent construction of new sets of instruments (Provine, 3); the pitch Koreans were making royal efforts to emulate and maintain was, strangely enough, the result of the sum length of three of Emperor Huizong’s five left-hand fingers (Provine, 5). Provine’s detailed research of the origin and measurement of the Hwangjong pitch used in the Confucian Ceremonial Music (mumyo cheryeak) establishes well the level of veneration and ideological correctness with which Korean Confucians adhered to the ancient Chinese imperial practices. From another angle, the long history of cultural interaction between China and Korea shows an equally long history of gift exchanges. The problem remains on how to interpret Koreans’ eagerness to incorporate the newly-imported foreign instruments in their own state sacrificial rites simply as a means to “elevate her culture by emulating practices of the mother lode of culture” (Provine, 2). Putting a new gift to an immediate use should not necessarily be interpreted as cultural servitude or ineptitude, for the same reason that the adoption of the African-American blues into the mainstream American music cannot possibly be the mainstreamers’ admission of their cultural inferiority. Wang Kôn, in founding Koryô in 918, “considered himself to be the successor to the mantle of Koguryô.” Insofar as his successors continued to uphold the independent spirit of the ancient Koguryô, Koryô’s relationship with Sung was unlike the tributary relationship Chosôn had with China and was more likely engaged in an equal relationship with China. It is true that Koryô “admired the advance civilization of Sung China and so sought to satisfy its material and cultural wants by maintaining a harmonious relationship with Sung.”

“Thus, through the visits of official embassies and the travels of private merchants, Koryô exported such raw materials as gold, silver, copper, ginseng, and pine nuts, and hand-crafted items favored by the Sung people such as paper, brushes, ink, and fans, in return importing silk, books, porcelain, medicines, spices, and musical instruments.”

This amicable relationship was soon to be adjusted, as the Khitans and the Jurchens on the north began to expand their territories and exert military pressures on Sung and Koryô. In 1115, Akuta united the Jurchens and founded Chin. “Chin not only overran the Khitan Liao dynasty in 1125 but also captured the Sung capital at Kaifeng and took prisoner the Sung emperor and his father, who had reigned before him (1127).”

“Sung asked Koryô to intercede to secure the release of the two emperors, but Koryô refused again to help. Koryô had understood
the thrust of events on the continent and so was determined to remain aloof from the confrontation between Chin and Sung. In this situation, Koryo and Sung even suspended for a time their exchange of envoys.”

Based on these accounts, Koryo’s multifaceted foreign diplomacy—for her cultural enrichment as well as national safety, but at the expense of Sung’s ally—suggests cultural diplomacy of a complexity that eludes Provine’s interpretation.

In order to gauge the breadth and depth of an imported musical influence, it is necessary to contextualize its performance as situated in the Korean music as a whole. In the past, the Choson dynasty began as a tributary state to the Ming China, and their Sino-centric veneration was a political strategy necessary to maintaining peace. For example, Pak Yôn’s tireless efforts to coordinate the pitch system with the Chinese during the reign of King Sejong could also be viewed as a political as much as musical and ceremonial necessity, a means of insuring peaceful survival under the surveillance of the imperial Other. What about today? In what context is the Confucian Ceremonial Music performed? What process of training, rehearsal, and duration does its performance entail? What sort of appeal does it hold for the Korean audience? Since its entrance into the ancient ritual context down to the contemporary preservation as a national treasure, has the Confucian Ceremonial Music endured the test of time and won the hearts of Koreans? The pitch in question is featured in only one very short repertoire during the semiannual ceremony, and its musical simplicity requires “no rigorous rehearsal.”

Nevertheless, its nationalistic importance as part of the Korean ritual musical and Confucian heritage will not be hampered.

Music sounds the people.

“The importation and Koreanization of Chinese poetry and music is not as simple a process as this group’s music-making, but I believe it was made possible by similar factors: the open-minded willingness to accept a foreign music without resistance, and the musical ability to make that music one’s own.” (Hwang, 4)

A performance is a simultaneous declaration of our shared humanity and a commentary on the uniqueness of particular cultures, and musical performance is such declaration through “voice,” be it human or instrumental. Vocal pronouncement of humanity echoes the saying from one of the Five Confucian Classical texts: in order to assess the state of affairs of a country, one only needs to listen to its current music. What music sounds Korean character and sentiments? What characterizes the oral, lyrical, instrumental, or dance arts as the expressions of the people who perform and appreciate them? It may sound tautological, but insofar as humans are products of the environment, could musical expression be unaffected by the surrounding nature including the soil, water, food, and climate, and by the socio-political conditions?

At the core of the Korean tones, pitches, melodic, rhythmic, and vocal variations is the ‘Korea.’ “Thus, the Chinese people, places, events, and expressions that appear in Korean vocal music serve only to elevate the tone and enrich the content of the lyrics, while in the music there is no direct influence from China at all” (Hwang, 4). I would like to expand the discussion of cultural convergence and divergence on the p’ansori story-singing and the 6-string kumun’go music. The language of p’ansori had been originally constructed colloquially and formulaically from the native ritualistic chants and collaboratively with the existing poetic, lyrical, and narrative tradition.
In the nineteenth century, as the art's status rose with the aristocratic and royal patronages, its language was largely replaced with the Sino-Korean quotes and expressions by the likes of the scholar/critic Shin Chaehyo (1812-1882). Critics' assessments of his work vary: some applaud his work as refinement of a crude art originated among the outcast kwangdae, and others criticize him for deconstructing p'ansori to become yet another aristocratic yangban literature. From the perspective of performance, it was the singers who met the impossible challenge of restoring into “singing” what the “knowing” scholars had so nonchalantly committed, i.e., a corruption of its oral expression via Sino-literary-linguistic fusion. Upon hearing p'ansori, some in Chinese performance tradition strive to establish its origin in the long extinct art of Bienwen or Jugongdiao. Their association is more conceptually driven than empirically proven, that all forms somehow “had” to be rooted in China. Had these Chinese forms survived, they in all likelihood would have manifested close similarities to p’ansori. What is certain is that p'ansori singing is distinctly and inimitably “Korean.” The spread of zithers should also be viewed in the larger context of sharing the common cultural resources but developing differently with the regional specificities. It would be impossible to physically locate where the zither was first manufactured. What is certain is that zithers spread all through East Asia and beyond, each with variant structural and acoustic characteristics reflecting its ethnic expressiveness, inventiveness, and character; one of them happens to be kômun ‘go with the distinctly and inimitably Korean “voice.”

In sum, music is a celebration of humanity in genealogy and in regional divergence. Professors Provine and Hwang complement each other: one focusing on a cross-cultural genesis and the other on the creative dynamics of Korean music as its own master.
NOTES
1. Alarcón, quoted in Lavie and Swedenburg, p. 15.
2. Goldstein, p. 17.
3. Highly form-oriented experiments mixing Korean and Western or other foreign instruments, voices, rhythmic, melodic formulas, or movements.
5. Ibid., Introduction pp. 7-8.
7. Ibid., p. 128.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., p. 129.
13. See Paragraph 3 in Akki No. 19 (Chapter on Music), in Yegi (Li: Ji, Book of Ceremony).
14. Traditional terminology for entertaining actors, singers, musicians, and acrobats, treated as social outcasts.

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF SOURCES CITED


WAX PHILOSOPHICAL: RE-WRITING THE HISTORY OF CHINESE MUSICAL INFLUENCES IN KOREA

Andrew Killick

Commentary on:
"Music, Measurements, Pitch Survivals, and Bell Shapes in Korea," Robert C. Provine
"Korean Music and its Chinese Influences," Byungki Hwang

We have heard two insightful presentations on the subject of Chinese elements in the music of Korea. In some ways the two papers have expressed different points of view. Professor Provine emphasizes historical continuity between China and Korea, revealing how certain bells used in Korea today retain a shape originating in China well over two thousand years ago. Professor Hwang, on the other hand, suggests that the Chinese influences in Korean music have sometimes been exaggerated, and that these influences are more evident in the philosophy and conceptualization of Korean court music than in its actual sounds. Both scholars agree that the acceptance of Chinese influence in Korean music has not been a matter of mere imitation, and that the product of this influence has been something markedly different from any music that now exists in China.

There is no debate over the fact that Korea maintains musical traditions that have been influenced by China but that nevertheless remain distinctively Korean. In discussing these traditions of what we might call Sino-Korean music, we can choose to emphasize either the Chinese or the Korean elements. We can use these traditions to depict Korea either as a backward state culturally dependent on a more civilized neighbor, or as a proudly independent nation adapting foreign ideas to its own purposes. We can choose to see the influence either as Korea's passive submission to Chinese domination, or as Korea's active cooptation of what China had to offer. It seems to me that the way in which these choices have in fact been made at various times has changed in step with changes in the perception of Korea's place in the world and especially its relationship with China. I would like to illustrate this with a few historical examples.

Professor Hwang has already discussed Kim Pusik's History of the Three Kingdoms and its account of the origins of the Korean zithers körüng 'go and kayağüm. This twelfth-century work cites a still earlier but no longer extant volume, the Sila kogi or Old Record of the Silla Kingdom, which apparently already recognized both Korea's cultural indebtedness to China and its separate cultural identity. According to Kim Pusik, the Sila kogi stated that King Kasil of Kaya was inspired to create the kayağüm on seeing a Chinese instrument. We are then told, however, that the King declared, "Countries are different in tonal patterns and sounds," and ordered a musician named Urük to compose some new music for the kayağüm, presumably in a style deliberately differing from that of Chinese music (Song Bang-song 1980:25). The
historical veracity of the story is open to question, but what interests me is the assumption behind it: that Korean music was historically indebted to China yet quite self-consciously cultivated different "tonal patterns and sounds." This seems to anticipate Professor Hwang's view that the Chinese influence on Korean music has had little effect on its actual sounds.

Kim Pusik also claims that the kŏmun 'go was modeled on the Chinese qin (Song Bang-song 1980:26), though the two instruments resemble each other only in the most superficial way. While both are of the "long zither" type, the kŏmun 'go has raised frets, movable bridges, and a pencil-like plectrum, none of which is found on the qin. Intriguingly, Professor Hwang suggests that Kim Pusik associated the kŏmun 'go with the qin because of its function rather than its form: both instruments were vehicles of self-cultivation for the literati. The logic is the same as that of Robert Van Gulik in his celebrated book on the qin, *The Lore of the Chinese Lute* (Van Gulik 1969:ix). While aware that the qin was technically a zither, Van Gulik chose to translate qin as "lute" because of his view that the qin held a position in Chinese culture equivalent to that of the lute in Renaissance Europe. To many writers, resemblances of function can seem more important than abstract taxonomies and demonstrable historical connections, and Professor Hwang here offers us an object lesson in how to put ourselves into the mind of a writer distant from us in time or space. In this case, the writer's objective was perhaps to show that Korea had an instrument equivalent to one of China's most revered symbols of cultivation and refinement, the qin. Kim's veneration of Chinese civilization, which Professor Hwang calls an attitude of servility (*sadaeju*), was typical of his time and of several centuries on either side of it, and as long as this attitude prevailed, to claim a Chinese origin for something was to enhance its image in Korean eyes. As we shall see, this remained true into the twentieth century.

Professor Provine's paper returns in part to the subject of his 1980 article ""Chinese" Ritual Music in Korea: The Origins, Codification, and Cultural Role of Aak." In the title of that article, Professor Provine puts the word "Chinese" in quotation marks to reinforce his point that, while "Koreans have for centuries considered aak to be Chinese in origin, style, and spirit," in reality "Korean aak... is no more Chinese than seventeenth-century opera is Greek or all piano music is Italian" (p. 23). As we have seen, the tradition of aak was anything but continuous: almost all the instruments of the original twelfth-century Chinese gift were destroyed when the capital was sacked in 1361, and the subsequent Korean method of establishing the basic pitch took considerable liberties with the procedures described in Chinese sources. Professor Provine's earlier article goes into greater detail on the process by which the fifteenth-century Korean attempt to "restore" the ancient Confucian ritual music resulted in what was essentially the creation of a new Korean genre. This is in stark contradiction to earlier accounts of aak's history, such as that of Song Kyong-rin, who made the same claim for aak that Japanese writers have made for gagaku:

The music and dancing performed [at Songgyun'gwian University] probably represents the most ancient tradition alive in the Orient. It is only in Korea that the tradition has been maintained continuously since the introduction of the music from China in the twelfth century, and it is this music alone of all the music received from China which has not been transformed totally beyond recognition at the hands of Korean musicians and has been preserved, presumably, in essentially unaltered form. (Song Kyong-rin 1973:142)

Professor Provine commented that his own
findings might “not be welcomed by those who consider Korea a cultural dependency of China and who like to think that it is authentic Chinese wayne which now survives in Korea” (Provine 1980:23). I suspect his views would find fewer opponents today than in 1980, for the emphasis in writing on Sino-Korean music has shifted away from the age-old myth of Chinese musical traditions surviving in Korea, toward what might also be a myth, in the sense of a story embodying a world view: the new myth of Korea’s cultural autonomy. It is probably no coincidence that the shift in myth has accompanied the emergence of a prosperous and confident South Korea, a country that has hosted the Olympic Games and co-hosted the World Soccer Cup, that has become a hirer rather than a supplier of cheap foreign labor, that has come through a recent economic crisis with its head bloody but unbowed. Nor do I think it a coincidence that the same period has seen a growing tendency for Korean parents to give their children “pure” Korean names rather than ones formed from Chinese ideographs. What might be surprising is that the change has come so late, for throughout much of the twentieth century the old Sinocentric myth continued to hold sway.

I can illustrate this with an example from my own research on the Korean opera form  
ch ‘anggük (Killick 2002), which provides another “origin myth” to add to the discussion. Ask anyone familiar with  
ch ‘anggük about the origins of the genre, and you will probably be told some version of the story published by Pak Hwang in his book  
Ch ‘anggüksa yon ‘gu (A Study of the History of  
Ch ‘anggük, 1976). Pak attributes his account to the recollection of veteran  
p’ansori singer Yi Tongbaek (1866-1947), whom he quotes as follows:

The Chinese [community in Seoul] had an opera house where Chinese singing actors performed operas every day... In addition to Chinese, many Koreans also attended... Korean singers who happened to be in Seoul at the time would visit out of interest and curiosity... and the master singer Kang Yonghwan would attend the theater whenever he had a chance, practically making it his home. Kang Yonghwan developed the  
p’ansori “Song of Ch’unhyang” into a  
ch ‘anggük on the model of these Chinese operas. (Pak Hwang 1976:17; translation abridged from Pilih 1994:45-46)

Pak Hwang surmises that this production took place in the autumn of 1903 at the Wŏn’gaksa, Korea’s first purpose-built theater, which had opened the previous year (pp. 21-23). He goes on to recount that the Wŏn’gaksa, as a venue for performing arts that expressed the Korean national spirit, was closed down by the Japanese shortly after they established a protectorate over Korea in 1905. The performers of this early  
ch ‘anggük, he states, then formed touring companies to seek their fortunes in the provinces, but even these wandering troupes were dispersed in 1910 when Korea was annexed by Japan (pp. 45-67). Although Pak Hwang describes a fair amount of  
ch ‘anggük activity during the first two decades of the colonial period (pp. 67-84), most others have assumed that “all  
ch ‘anggük disappeared from sight until 1935-1936” (Pilih 1994:50), when there was a large-scale revival. The consensus is that the nascent theatrical genre, created by  
p’ansori singers on the model of Chinese opera, was nipped in the bud by Japanese imperialism.

Since Pak Hwang’s book was written, however, meticulous research into contemporary newspaper reports and other primary sources has yielded little support for his account (e.g., Paek Hyŏnmi 1997). No definitive record has been found of a Chinese
theater in Seoul, nor of a visit by a Chinese opera troupe, before the first recorded ch'anggūk productions. The earliest unambiguous references to ch'anggūk describe performances at the Wŏn'gaksā theater in 1908, some five years after the “Song of Ch'unhyang” is said to have been dramatized (and after the ch'anggūk performers are said to have left for the provinces following the closing of the theater). Moreover, it appears that the supposed founder of ch'anggūk, Kang Yonghwan, died in 1900, before the Wŏn'gaksā was built (Paek Hyesuk 1992:77-79). And yet Pak Hwang’s story remains unquestioned except among a handful of scholars.

While the documentary record is too thin to admit of any final and authoritative account of ch'anggūk's origins and early history, the picture that emerges from the primary sources is one of Japanese and American influences rather than Chinese. Although there is no record of a Chinese theater in Seoul before the emergence of ch'anggūk, we do know that the American-owned Seoul Electric Company, which opened a streetcar line in Seoul around 1900, also operated a theater of sorts at its generating station near the East Gate, where silent movies as well as live performances were given. It was to this theater that American diplomat William Franklin Sands brought a performance troupe he had observed somewhere in the Korean countryside, which presented a dramatization of the popular story of Ch’unhyang in a form that may have anticipated some aspects of ch'anggūk (Sands 1987[1930]:179-181). We also know that several Japanese theaters were opened in Seoul after Korea became a Japanese protectorate in 1905, and that Korean students had been studying in Japan and witnessing the so-called “new-school” (shimpa) plays that were popular there at the time. It appears to have been one of these students, Yi Injik, who first brought a group of p’ansori singers together to perform a drama that we would now recognize as ch'anggūk.

Yi Injik’s role is well authenticated in contemporary newspaper accounts, while p’ansori singer Kang Yonghwan is not mentioned at all.

Why, then, has a story that does not square with the sources come to be so widely believed? The answer, I suggest, lies in preconceptions concerning the colonial relationship with Japan and the earlier tributary relationship with China. Pak Hwang’s story may not fit comfortably with the documentary record, but it fits extremely comfortably with the received idea that China has contributed positively to Korean culture while Japanese imperialism merely uprooted and suppressed any Korean aspiration toward progress. The idea of a productive Japanese influence has been virtually unthinkable within this view of history.

Yi Tongbaek’s testimony is derived from interviews conducted in the late colonial and early post-liberation years. Even if he was aware of Yi Injik’s role and motives and remembered the circumstances accurately, he would have had every reason to downplay any Japanese connections. The colonial regime became increasingly harsh and demanding during its last ten years as Japan stepped up its military program in various parts of Asia, and the colonists must have been even more unpopular than ever in Korea. After liberation, on the other hand, to tell the story I have told would have been to lay the ch'anggūk performers open to the charge of collaborationism—a charge that some of them did, in fact, have to face (Sŏ Yŏnho 1994:99). An influence from China was much more acceptable, for China had been recognized for centuries as the legitimate source of a civilization which Korea was proud to share—and China had been an enemy of Japan in the recent war.

The accepted story thus emerges as an origin myth that functions to confer legitimacy on the genre.
In short, the ascription of ch'angguk's origins to the influence of Chinese opera sprang from the same motivation as Kim Pusik's ascription of the kômun'go's origins to the Chinese qin and Song Kyong-rin's assertion that Korean aak maintains ancient Chinese yayue essentially unchanged. Until the late twentieth century, equating Korean things with Chinese was a way of winning respect for them, and the historian of Sino-Korean cultural forms needs to keep this in mind and allow for the Sinocentric bias when interpreting earlier writings, especially now as we move into an era in which Korea is increasingly seen as the equal or even the superior of China in economics and in culture. At the same time, we need to allow for our own potential biases when we speak about Korea's past from the perspective of a more powerful and assertive contemporary South Korea. In steering a course between the opposing myths of Korea's cultural dependency and its cultural autonomy, we are fortunate to have before us such admirable models as the two presentations we have heard today.

In concluding this discussion, I hope I may be permitted to wax philosophical a little—and I use the word “wax” advisedly, because I think we should end by conjuring up for ourselves the image of Pak Yôn rolling his artificial millet grains out of beeswax and lining them up so that the measurements came out as he thought they should. In a very literal sense, he was fabricating his evidence; but I suspect that if we were ruthlessly honest with ourselves, we would find that all our historical studies involve an element of fabrication that differs from his in degree more than in kind. We don't, I hope, fabricate our data out of nothing; but neither did Pak Yôn, and like him, we are often tempted to manipulate our material in ways that improve the fit between past and present.

There is something comforting in the idea that Koreans in the past thought of themselves as Koreans do today. But a salutary lesson to be learned from Gary Tomlinson's much-admired book Music in Renaissance Magic: Toward a Historiography of Others is that the recognition of elements in the past that are familiar to us can blind us to the ways in which the past is different and distant from us (Tomlinson 1993:9-20). The subtitle of Tomlinson's book could well stand as a perpetual reminder that if we are to understand the past, its "otherness" must be kept constantly in mind. Fortunately, ethnomusicologists are in a good position to do this, since they are accustomed to studying musical cultures other than their own, and if some of their methods can be brought to bear on societies that are distant from us historically as well as culturally, we may be on our way to a better understanding of the past through an integrated, historical ethnomusicology.
REFERENCES CITED


Sands, William Franklin. 1987[1930]. At the Court of Korea, London: Century Hutchinson Ltd. First published 1930 as Undiplomatic Memories.


Musings on Origins and Identities: Responses to Provine and Hwang

Elizabeth Tolbert

It is a great pleasure to be here today to comment on these two fascinating papers on Korean music history. I am especially moved to learn that the HNM Colloquium is a tribute to a daughter to honor a great woman writer, one who is beloved throughout Korea.

As a non-specialist, my perspective will be that of an ethnomusicologist who knows little about Korean music. As a matter of fact, my area of specialization is Finnish-Karelia, specifically, the women’s ritual lament tradition, which as far as I know, bears no geographical or historical continuities with Korean music of any kind. However, I have learned a bit about contemporary attitudes toward Korean traditional music by way of teaching ethnomusicology to Korean students at the Peabody Conservatory, many of whom, despite my best efforts, have a strong antipathy towards such music. Therefore, in my commentary I will allude to issues that are of interest to ethnomusicologists more broadly, namely, the role of musical tradition in the construction of identity, and how interpretations of the past are constantly reinterpreted according to present needs.

As the two papers by Professors Provine and Hwang demonstrate, perspectives on what is useful knowledge and how to interpret it depend crucially on whether one is an insider or outsider to cultural tradition. Although both papers present convincing “facts,” the meaning of these facts is far from straightforward.

For example, Provine persuasively demonstrates that ancient Chinese bells from 285 B.C. formed the visual model for bells in 12th century China, and that the modern pitch standard for Korean aak, or ritual court music, is also derived from those same 12th century Chinese bells. It also seems likely, given the documentary evidence, that the difference in pitch between the ancient bells excavated in 1104 and their 12th century reconstruction was due to an accommodation between traditional methods of measurement using grains of millet with a method of measurement that took as its foundation the lengths of three of the Emperor’s fingers. Indeed, Provine notes that historical documents were being constantly reinterpreted to fit current needs, as long as claims could be made for the authenticity and hence continuity of the current practices. Yet, Provine’s evidence suggests that the grounds of authenticity are elusive, and are not as fixed as they might seem to be in the surviving documents of the ruling classes, begging the question as to the underlying confluent and divergent interests that remain, and that will likely always remain, undocumented. Perhaps irretrievable
information concerning the unofficial and undocumented musical life of the time would be necessary to untangle the negotiations between Confucian concepts of order, the lengths of the Emperor’s fingers, visual forms of ancient Chinese bells, grains of millet in both natural and beeswax forms, and the processes that led to such negotiations in the first place.

Hwang’s paper likewise raises questions of history, reinterpretation and authenticity. As one of the living masters of kayagum music in Korea, he is naturally concerned with the authenticity of Korean music for contemporary audiences. However, Hwang, like Provine, notes that the surviving sources linking Korean music to ancient Chinese sources were subject to the political winds of the times, and as such can not be interpreted as reliable indicators of either continuity or discontinuity of traditions. He suggests that while Confucian ideas may have informed or at least legitimized the musical practice of Korean court music, and that the qin and kómun’go were presumed to share an originally Confucian philosophy, Korean musical instruments were most likely not modeled upon their putative philosophical counterparts in China. He also proposes that the sounds of Korean music were never “Chinese,” but always quintessentially “Korean.”

At this point we get to the crucial difference between the papers—they represent different ideas about the “origins” of Korean music. In other words, it appears that we have at our disposal certain facts that are at odds with certain origin myths but that nevertheless seem to have little effect on erasing the force of such myths. In the case of the history of Korean traditional music, the effort is further complicated by the fact that the creation of origins is already embedded in the practice of Confucian philosophy. The production of knowledge always has a practical and ethical component, one that is explicitly foregrounded in the practice of historical interpretations and reinterpretations of Confucian music theory.

At what point does Korean music history begin? Does it begin in China, in Korea, and in times and places when the entities of China and Korea, not to mention their musics, themselves did not exist? Are the origins of ideas about music in principle separable from the sounds of music, as suggested by Hwang? To the contrary, I would like to suggest that musical sounds are never just sounds with essential meanings, but always entail a belief system to render them intelligible. In other words, origin myths are crucial to the intelligibility and hence identity of Korean music as Korean. The question remains as to the motivations behind the origin myths concerning Korean music, both in the historical past and in the present, and for whom and by whom such myths are created.

To further elaborate on this point, I now look not to my colleagues in ethnomusicology or musicology, but to one of the greatest writers on the question of origins, the late natural science writer Stephen Jay Gould. Gould, who wrote mostly on biological evolution, notes that “stories about beginnings come in only two basic modes. An entity either has an explicit point of origin, a specific time and place of creation, or else it evolves and has no definable moment of entry into the world.”

To illustrate, Gould tells an anecdote about the origins of baseball. In 1908, a commission designated to unearth the origins of the game (not unlike the official histories commissioned by Chinese and Korean rulers on the origins of dynasties) came up with the following proclamation: “first, that baseball had its origins in the United States” and second, “that the first scheme for playing it, according to the best evidence available to date, was devised by
Abner Doubleday, at Cooperstown, NY, in 1839. Actually, baseball was derived from a variety of English stick and ball games, some even known in England by the moniker ‘base ball,’ and moreover, Abner Doubleday had no known connections to baseball. However, the origin myth stuck. Why? Because the origins of baseball are murky, its origin story needs to be told with an inversely proportionate dose of exactitude. Gould proposes that Doubleday’s status as a military hero, along with the fact that by 1908 baseball was already considered to be quintessentially American in the eyes of the American public, made the story not only plausible but more importantly, intelligible, and hence meaningful to current concerns.

But to bring the questions of origins back to music and into the present: for whom is it important that Korean music have this or that origin? How is traditional Korean music valued differently among various generations of Koreans, both in Korea and abroad? How does social class and gender and religious affiliation fit into the mix? Although I have but scattered anecdotal evidence at my disposal, I am certain that one origin story will not do for all of these groups.

For example, among my students at the Peabody Conservatory, I hear from those who are embarrassed that I broach the topic of Korean music at all, to those who are grateful that I have allowed them not to be embarrassed about Korean traditional music because it is taught in the Conservatory, to those who want to know more about ‘their’ roots, even if Korean traditional music has not previously been part of their life, to those who say that they’ve changed their mind and that maybe Western classical music is not better than Korean classical music, a courageous admission that challenges ingrained family and institutional values. Perhaps not surprisingly, as Korean students admit even a bit of Korean traditional music into their lives, they also gain the courage to protest against their American identification as “Asian.” Students are chagrined to learn that as “Asians,” they are considered to be less “musical” than non-Asians, even if “Asians” are considered to possess superior technique. This racial and ethnic stereotyping extends to professional musicians, such as composer and komun’go player Jin Hi Kim, who finds herself somewhere in between the Korean and American worlds. Born in Korea and living in the U.S., she has various identities depending on the context. During her recent visit to Peabody she was multiply identified as an Asian composer, a quintessentially Korean composer, a composer who happens to be Korean, a woman composer, an Asian woman composer, and even a Korean woman composer, yet never primarily as a performer. Her relationship to tradition and identity takes on yet another hue when in Korea, where she fits neither the composer nor ‘traditional’ performer mode.

This question of Korean music and identity struck me recently as I was perusing the abstracts of the annual meeting of Society for Ethnomusicology, which convened October 24-28, 2001 in Detroit. I came across a panel consisting of young Korean music scholars who are attempting to find a voice, both for Korean identity as expressed through music, and for themselves as Western trained ethnomusicologists. They consist of a diverse group of Koreans, Korean Americans, and non-Koreans, who are asking themselves questions such as the following: who is qualified to speak for Korean music? Is Korean traditional music a fossilized tradition or a living one? Why are some genres of traditional music ostracized, even as their popularity grows? Why have the audiences for traditional music performances increased? What is the role of Korean traditional music in promoting a national identity and national, yet non-traditional, musics? It remains to be seen how the conversation will develop, not only...
among Korean music scholars but in the larger ethnomusicological community, where issues concerning the musical construction of cultural difference and identity loom large. Yet perhaps most importantly, the debates in Korean musicology lead us to contemplate how issues of belief and origins and identity can be made intelligible in an intercultural context, an ever more pressing concern in our present world situation, especially after the events of September 11, 2001. Even though music is far from a universal language, its presence as a universal in human culture may give us a point of imagined origin from which to begin more meaningful and intelligible intercultural conversations, both about music and about the diversity of values that crisscross one another in an ever more interconnected world.

NOTES


2. Ibid., p. 50.
**Profiles**

**Lecturers:**

**Byung-ki Hwang**

Byung-ki Hwang is an Emeritus Professor of Korean Music at Ehwa Womans University in Seoul. Although he received a law degree from Seoul National University in 1959, Hwang had studied *kayagŭm* and composition at the National Center for Korean Traditional Performing Arts from 1951. He has received critical acclaim as the scholar of Korean traditional music and composer and performer who opened a new chapter in contemporary re-creation of *kayagŭm* music. Hwang has been awarded numerous prizes, including the prestigious Chungang Cultural Grand Prize in 1992. He has toured widely since 1964, performing both traditional pieces and his own compositions in major venues including New York’s Carnegie Hall and Paris’s Musée Guimet. In 2000 he was elected to the National Academy of Arts. Hwang currently serves on the government’s Cultural Property Preservation Committee and the Korean Section of the International Society for Contemporary Music. byungkihwang@hotmail.com, http://bkh.bestmusician.co.kr

**Robert C. Provine**

Robert C. Provine is Chairman of the Division of Musicology and Ethnomusicology at the University of Maryland, College Park. He holds a B.A. and M.A. in Music, an M.A. in Regional Studies: East Asia, and Ph.D. in Music, all from Harvard University. Provine researches the music of East Asia (China, Korea, and Japan), with a particular focus on Korean traditional music and a disciplinary emphasis on historical ethnomusicology. Aside from having taught for many years in the United Kingdom, he is a member of the Board of the Society for Asian Music and past President of both the Association for Korean Studies in Europe and the Association for Korean Music Research. He has contributed the country article "Korea" and nineteen shorter entries to the second edition of the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (2001). He is the author of *Essays on Sino-Korean Musicology: Early Sources for Korean Ritual Music* (1988) and many articles. provine@umd.edu, http://www.wam.umd.edu/~provine.
JoonYeob Han

Han JoonYeob was appointed Minister for Public Affairs at the Korean Embassy in Washington DC in 1999. He was a long-time career journalist in print and TV media in Korea before joining the government. During his 30 years of experience as a journalist, he worked as Hong Kong Correspondent for Korean Broadcasting System (KBS) and London Correspondent for Sisa Journal. In these capacities, he witnessed and covered the two most memorable democratic movements in the Asian region: the Tiananmen Massacre in China and the Kwangju student uprising in Korea. In 1992, Minister Han moved to the UK and covered the turbulent political developments in Northern Ireland. As of August 2002, Minister Han will serve as Assistant Minister in charge of the Korean Information Services (KOIS) in the Korea Government Information Agency.

Discussants:

Andrew P. Killick

Andrew P. Killick is Assistant Professor of Ethnomusicology at The Florida State University and President of the Association for Korean Music Research. He is the author of a doctoral dissertation on Korean ch'anggûk opera (University of Washington, 1998), and numerous published articles. Since 1988 he has studied kayagûm with Byung-ki Hwang. His research interest in musical theater extends from Korean opera to the Broadway and Hollywood musical. Killick is also a prize-winning translator of modern Korean literature.

Chan E. Park

Chan E. Park, Assistant Professor of Korean Language, Literature, and Folklore at The Ohio State University, is a performer and ethnographer of p'ansori, a story-singing tradition of Korea. For the past two decades, Park has worked toward inventing and theorizing the global presentation of local narrative traditions, with specific focus on the transnational performance of p'ansori for English speaking audiences. Park has written extensively on the interdisciplinary applicability of p'ansori. Her monograph, Voices from the Strawnai: Toward an Ethnography of P’ansori Singing, is forthcoming at the University of Hawaii Press.

park-miller.1@osu.edu, chanpark+@osu.edu, http://deall.ohio-state.edu/park-miller.1
Elizabeth D. Tolbert

Elizabeth D. Tolbert is Professor of Ethnomusicology at the Peabody Conservatory of the Johns Hopkins University. She received her Ph.D. from the University of California, Los Angeles. She has pursued fieldwork in Finland with Finnish-Karelian lamenters, and among conservatory musicians in the United States. Her publications reflect her diverse interests in ethnomusicological theory, ritual, psychology of music, and intercultural aesthetics. tolbert@peabody.jhu.edu, http://www.peabody.jhu.edu/cons/consfac/cons-mushist-fac.html

Conveners:

Roy Richard Grinker

Roy Richard Grinker is Professor of Anthropology and International Affairs at the George Washington University. He is the author of publications on ethnicity and nationalism in Africa and Korea, including Korea and Its Futures: Unification and the Unfinished War (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998). His most recent book is a biography of the late anthropologist, Colin M. Turnbull, In the Arms of Africa: The Life of Colin M. Turnbull (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000). rgrink@gwu.edu, http://www.gwu.edu/~elliott/faculty/staff/grinker.cfm

Young-Key Kim-Renaud

Young-Key Kim-Renaud is Professor of Korean Language and Culture and International Affairs at GW. She is past President of the International Circle of Korean Linguistics. A theoretical linguist with broad interest in Korean humanities and Asian affairs, Kim-Renaud has published five books and numerous articles in the area of Korean phonology, writing system, honorifics, and general Korean cultural history. kimrenau@gwu.edu, http://home.gwu.edu/~kimrenau, http://myprofile.cos.com/kimreny76

Kirk W. Larsen

Kirk W. Larsen is Korea Foundation Assistant Professor of History and International Affairs at the George Washington University, and co-convenor of the HMS Colloquium in the Korean Humanities. He received his Ph.D. in History at Harvard University. His research interests include imperialism and trade in Korea, East Asian industrialization, and the Overseas Chinese community in Korea. His forthcoming book explores Chinese commercial imperialism in late 19th century Korea. kwlarsen@gwu.edu, http://www.gwu.edu/~elliott/faculty/staff/larsen.cfm
KOREAN MUSIC

Glossary

Aak 雅樂 – ritual Korean court music.
Bianzhong 編鐘 – (Korean p'yónjong) set of tuned bells.
Chakay – instrument from Thailand.
Ch'anggik 唱劇 – Korean opera form
Ch'ón 寸 – ten p'un, or 10 grains millet
Choryegich'ok 造禮器尺 – measuring stick for ritual items
Choson Dynasty 朝鮮 (Korea. 1392-1910)
Dahe 大和 – great harmony
Dasheng 大晟 – musical system
dizi 笛子 – Chinese flute
erhu 二胡 – Chinese bowed instrument
gagaku 雅樂 – Japanese court music
Han Dynasty 漢 (China. 206 B.C.–220 A.D.)
Haegum 玺琴 – Korean bowed instrument
Emperor Huizong 徽宗 (r. 1100-1125)
Huangzhong 黃鐘 – fundamental pitch
Hwangjongch'ok 黃鐘尺 – fundamental measuring length
Hyangak 鄉樂 – repertoire of Korean court music
Jin Dynasty 金 (China. 1115-1234)
Kaesong 開城 – capital city of Koryô
Kaya Kingdom 伽倻 (Korea. ?-562 CE)
Kayagum – 伽倻琴 Korean twelve-stringed zither
Koguryo Kingdom 高句麗 (? B.C.-668)
kómun'go 거문고 – Korean zither
Koryo Dynasty 高麗 (Korea. 918-1392)
koto 箏 – Japanese 13-string instrument
King Kasil of Kaya 가실
King Sejong 世宗 – (1397-1450) ruled the Choson Dynasty from 1418-1450.
kòso 柊黍 – grains of black millet
Kugak 國樂 – Korean traditional music
Migyaun – Myanmar (Burma) instrument
Paekche Kingdom 百濟 (Korea. ? B.C.-663 A.D.)
Pak Yŏn 朴埈 – Theorist/musicologist scholar-official (1378-1458).
P'ansori 판소리 – traditional singing-storytelling
P'obaekch'ok 布帛尺 – measuring stick for cloth.
P'un 分 – length of 1 grain of millet
qin 琴 – Chinese zither.
sadaejuïi 事大主義 – (attitude of servility).
se 瑟 – Chinese zither.
Shuowen 說文 – ancient dictionary.
Silla Kingdom 新羅 (Korea, ? B.C.-935 A.D.)
Sui Dynasty 隋 (China, 581-618)
Song Dynasty 宋 (China, 960-1279)
sulâe 솔대 – bamboo plectrum
T’aegum 太鼓 – Korean flute
Tangak 唐樂 – style of music from China
Urük 于勒 – (name of a musician)
Wang Kôn 王建 – (877-943), a high-ranking military official who reunited the country in 918 under the new Koryô dynasty (918-1392).

Wei Hanjin 魏漢津 – advisor to Emperor Huizong who redefined the huangzhong pitch pipe.
Wôn’gaksa 圓覺寺 – Korea’s first purpose-built theater.
Yayue 雅樂 – Chinese ancient ceremonial music.
Yseek 禮樂 – Chinese doctrine of ceremony.
King Yejong 睿宗 (ruled 1105-22) of Koryô
Marquis Yi 侯乙 – of the state of Zeng, China.
King Yôngjo 英祖 (1724-76)
Yuan Dynasty 元 (China, 1280-1368)
Zeng 郳 – small state in China that existed during the Warring States Period (475-221 B.C.)
zheng 筝 – Chinese 15-string instrument