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Иньхва С. /КОРЕЯ/
Inhwa S. /KOREA/**КОРЕЙ ОЗЕКИ САЛТТАГЫ МУЗЫКАСЫ ЖАНА АНЫ НОТАГА ЖАЗУУ:
ӨЗГӨРҮҮ ЖАНА САЛТТЫ САКТОО****КОРЕЙСКАЯ МУЗЫКА УСТНОЙ ТРАДИЦИИ И НОТАЦИЯ: ИЗМЕНЕНИЕ
И ПРЕЕМСТВЕННОСТЬ****ORALITY AND NOTATION OF KOREAN TRADITIONAL MUSIC:
CHANGE AND CONTINUITY**

Abstract. Korean traditional music has primarily been transmitted orally. Teachers did not play instruments but sang melodies using a mnemonic system called Gu-eum («mouth tone»). Despite this oral tradition, Korea also has a rich history of music notation, especially in court and aristocratic music, where systems like Jeongganbo (a 15th-century mensural notation) were used. In the 20th century, Western influences brought changes to how music was taught and passed down. My research explores the transformation and continuity of oral and written transmission methods across different musical genres. While both Gu-eum and notations have been studied, few works offer an integrated perspective. Through interviews and literature review, I examined what has evolved and what persists. The findings show that Gu-eum still functions as a key communication tool in education, though it now plays a secondary role. Jeongganbo remains in use for classical music and is even applied in some folk traditions. This study highlights the enduring roles of both oral and notated systems and how they have adapted within the transmission of Korean traditional music.

Key word: Korea, Gy-eum, notation, traditional music, oral transmission, orality

Аннотация. Корей салттуу музыкасы, негизинен, оозеки түрүндө муундан муунга өтүп келген. Мугалимдер аспапты колдонбой, обондорду «Гу-ым» («ооз обону») деп аталган мнемоникалык системаны колдонуп ырдашчу. Бул оозеки салтка карабастан, Кореяда музыкалык нотацыйнын да бай тарыхы бар, айрыкча сарай жана ак сөөктөрдүн музыкасында Жонгганбо (15-кылымдагы өлчөмдүү нотацый) сыяктуу системалар колдонулган. 20-кылымда Батыштын таасири музыканы окутуу жана өткөрүп берүү ыкмаларына өзгөрүүлөрдү алып келди. Менин изилдөөм ар кандай музыкалык жанрлардагы оозеки жана жазуу жүзүндөгү өткөрүп берүү ыкмаларынын трансформациясын жана үзгүлтүксүздүгүн изилдейт. Гу-ым да, нотацыйлар да изилденгени менен, экөөнү тең интеграцияланган көз караштан караган эмгектер аз. Интервьюлар жана адабияттарды карап чыгуу аркылуу мен эмне өзгөргөнүн жана эмне сакталып калганын изилдедим. Жыйынтыктар көрсөткөндөй, Гу-ым билим берүүдө негизги байланыш куралы катары иштеп жатат, бирок азыр экинчи даражадагы ролду ойнойт. Жонгганбо классикалык музыкада колдонулуп келет, атүгүл кээ бир элдик салттарда да колдонулат. Бул изилдөө оозеки жана ноталык системалардын туруктуу ролдорун жана алардын корей салттуу музыкасын өткөрүп берүүдө кандайча ыңгайлашкандыгын баса белгилейт.

Негизги сөздөр: Корея, Кым, нотацый, салттык музыка, оозеки чыгармачылык.

Аннотация. Корейская традиционная музыка в основном передавалась устно. Учитель, проходя с учениками льным произведением, он не играл музыку на инструменте, а напевал мелодию, используя своеобразную мнемоническую систему под названием Гу-ым (или Куым), что буквально означает «звук изо рта». Тем не менее, в Корее существует достаточно развитая традиция записи музыки. Особенно в придворной и аристократической музыке использовались различные системы нотаций, в том числе мензурная нотацый под названием Чонганбо. С начала XX века, с приходом западного образа жизни в Корею, изменились и стали

использоваться новые музыкальные передачи. Мой подход к вопросу преемственности и изменений в передаче старой традиции музыки в форме нотных записей, которые проявляются по-разному в зависимости от жанра музыки. Устная связь и нотация в корейской традиционной музыке уже рассматривалась, однако до сих пор не было подробного и комплексного разговора об их взаимосвязи. С этой целью я провел ряд интервью и обширный обзор литературы, чтобы выяснить, что меняется и что сохраняется. Результаты показывают, что гуым по-прежнему играет главную роль в качестве боевой музыкальной коммуникации, и занимает не ведущее место в обучении. Также Чонганбо, впервые появившийся в XV веке, надпись с гуымом до сих пор широко используется в классической музыке, а также в некоторых жанрах народной музыки. Важность данного исследования заключается в том, что в нем делается попытка отметить привнесение корейской музыки в устаревшую традицию в форме нотных записей о проблемах сохранения традиций, преемственности, а также неизбежных изменений.

Ключевые слова: Корея, Кым, нотация, традиционная музыка, устная передача, устное творчество

I. Introduction

Korean traditional music has basically been orally transmitted. That is, even the genres for which notation exists have been usually taught by ear and memorized. With notations having archival or preservation role¹, orality and notation have coexisted throughout Korean music history since music notation first appeared.

Korean traditional music is usually classified into two major categories according to the musical style: classical music and folk music. Classical music includes court and aristocratic music. It is supposed to be joyful without excess, sorrowful but not bitter, holding a philosophical viewpoint that this music helps one control emotions². Classical music was written down in several different notation systems. Some are still persistently used, though the use of Western staff notation has become more prevalent since its introduction into Korea in the late 19th century. On the other hand, folk music, which was enjoyed more by the common people, maximizing the expression of emotions and honestly portraying happiness, anger, grief and pleasure³, was not notated until 20th century with a few exceptions.

With a goal to see what has changed and what has remained, I did some interviews and a wide range of literature reviews. In this paper, I will present orality and notations in Korean

traditional music culture by showing different music and notations and discuss their meaning in today's music transmission.

II. Orality and Notation of Classical Music

Among several different notations for classical music, I will focus on Jeongganbo which first appeared in the Annals of King Sejong (reign: 1418-1450). It is regarded to have been invented by the King himself, who invented the Korean alphabet. According to the preface to Scores from the Annals of King Sejong, it was created to compensate for the defects of the existing mnemonic systems, which could not display the duration or rhythms of music.

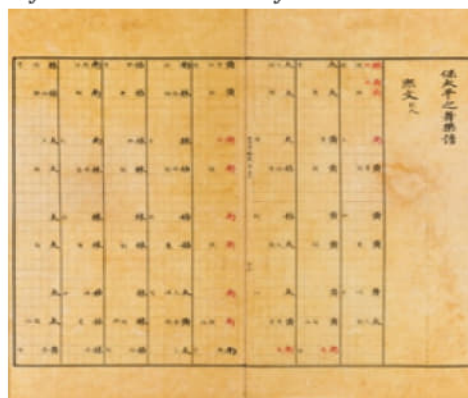


Figure 1. Huimun in Jeongganbo Notation in the Annals of King Sejong⁴

Huimun in <Figure 1> is the original version of Huimun of the present royal shrine ritual music. It is written in Jeongganbo, a mensural

¹So Inhwa, Historical Change and Meaning of Korean Tablature, Hapjabo, Musical Notations of Korea, Korean Musicology Series 4 (Seoul: National Gugak Center, 2010), pp.129.

²Gugak Performance Program Guide (Seoul: Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, 2008) p.11

³Gugak Performance Program Guide (2008), p.11.

⁴Scores from the Annals of King Sejong, Korean Musicology Series Vol.20(Seoul: National Gugak Center, 1989) p.63.

notation made up of columns of small squares. The time value of tones is shown by relating one beat to one square called Jeonggan, and the symbols for pitches are placed in the squares⁵. Pitches were indicated either with letter, mnemonic syllables, or tablature. Traditional Jeongganbo is read in the East Asian fashion as other notations: top to bottom, right to left.

The present version is basically the same as that made by King Sejong, though it has some auxiliary symbols for ornaments and notates rhythmic subtleties by not only dividing columns into several groups of squares but also subdividing each square into some parts, from two to six. Chinese letters are the most commonly used to indicate pitch in Jeongganbo. Later in this chapter, I will show you Jeongganbo of Geomungo (a six-stringed zither) classical music and Gagok, lyric song cycles accompanied by an orchestra.

However, according to Seong Kyeong-rin (1911-2008) who went to the school of royal institute of court music, majoring in Geomungo, no music score was used at first in class.



Figure 2. Seong Kyeong-rin playing Geomungo⁶

In an interview with me in 1997, he said that “students could not follow the class unless they memorized the melodies in Gu-eum. They wrote down what they heard. When they didn’t have the instrument on them, they sang the melody in order not to forget.” This means music teaching was done by ear, that is, orally.

Still today Gu-eum is used as a teaching tool, but now it takes a secondary place in teaching with easier access to printed music scores and

recording machines. However, Gu-eum is still regarded to contain the essence of the music and singing the melody in Gu-eum is highly valued as an important musical practice. Therefore, in the present notation of traditional music, Gu-eum is often written together with pitches in classical Geomungo music notation as you see in <Figure 3> below.



Figure 3. Gyeomyeongarakdodeuri, a classical Music, in Jeongganbo Notation for Geomungo⁷

<Figure 3> shows Geomungo notation of Gyeomyeongarakdodeuri, one of classical music. Jeongganbo notation in <Figure 3> is consisted of 8 sets of narrow and wide columns. In the first wide column (from the right side), there are the playing technique signs of Janggu, an hourglass-shaped drum which plays rhythm, written in squares.

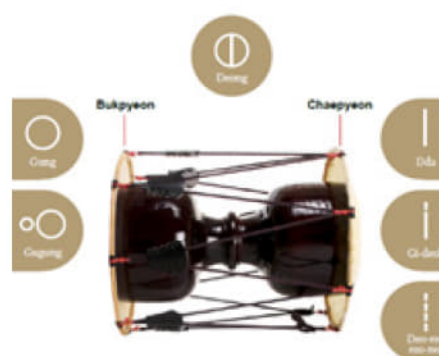


Figure 4 Janggu and the signs of its playing technique⁸

Then, in the next narrow column, Geomungo Gu-eum is written in Korean alphabet. In the

⁵So Inhwa, Theoretical Perspectives on Korean Traditional Music An Introduction, Korean Music Resources V. (Seoul: National Center for Korean Traditional Performing Arts, 2002)

⁶ <https://daarts.or.kr/handle/11080/16405>, Seong Gyeong-rin, (Seoul: Korean Art Digital Archive, 2003)

⁷Hwang Deuk-ju, Lee O-gyu, Jeongak Geomungobo (Seoul: Eunha Publishing Company, 1992), p.107.

⁸https://www.igbf.kr/DataFiles/App/PDF/janggu_en_print.pdf, (Seoul: Gugak Broadcasting Foundation, 2016)

next wide column, there are pitches written in Chinese characters. Here, I would like to introduce Geomungo Gu-eum. Geomungo is played by plucking with a stick plectrum and has more rests between tones compared to wind instruments. Therefore, the syllables of the major Gu-eum of Geomungo tend to start with d (ㄷ) and end on consonants as in dung (뚱), dang (당) and dong (동), while those of the flute, a wind instrument whose sound continues, start with r (ㄹ) and end on vowel without final consonant as in reo (려), ru (루), ra (라), ro (로), ri (리). The syllables of Geomungo Gu-eum tend to refer to not pitches but playing techniques. For example, on the Geomungo, the same dang (당) is used whether the ring finger

presses the second string at the 4th fret, or 5th fret, or 7th fret or 8th fret. The same syllable, jing (징), is also used for several different pitches produced by the thumb at different frets.

Tteul (툼) is for plucking up.

<Figure 5> shows several basic Gu-eum, on the two major strings, the 2nd string, called Yuhyeon (thick string, lit., large string), and the 3rd one, called Daehyeon (thin string, lit., played string), to play melody in the position when the ring finger of the left hand presses the 2nd string at the 4th fret. The dark vowels like eo(ㅝ) and u(ㅜ) are typical of sounds from the thick string, Daehyeon, while the bright vowels like a(ㅏ) and o(ㅗ) are of thin string, Yuhyeon.

	3rd string, Daehyeon (thick string)				2nd string, Yuhyeon (thin string)		
Finger	3rd	index	thumb	thumb	4th	index	thumb
Fret	4th	5th	6 th	from 7 th	4th	5th	from 6th
Basic syllable	deong 댁	dung 뚱	deung 둥	jing 징	dang 당	dong 동	jing 징
Pitch	ab	bb	C	eb, f, etc.	eb	f	ab, bb, etc.

Figure 5. Basic Geomungo Gu-eum in the Position of the Ring Finger of the Left Hand Pressing the 2nd String at the 4th fret

When two successive tones are slurred by producing the second tone without using plectrum, the initial consonant of the second syllable is changed into r (ㄹ) and they end on vowel. For instance, dang (당) and dong (동) become daro (랴로), and dong (동) and dang (당) become dora (도라), and etc.

Then, what about Gagak notation? Gagak was cultivated by the literati of the Joseon

dynasty (1392-1910). Its original version based on a rhythmic cycle of sixteen beats is not only long but also slow so that it is difficult to remember not only the melody but also the rhythmic patterns. However, traditionally no music notation indicating exact pitches and rhythms was used. Instead, the singers put some marks to show moving up and down or connecting syllables, next to the words as in <Figure 6>.⁹



Figure 6. Gagokwollyu (the Origin of Gagok) published in 1876¹⁰

⁹Kim Young-woon, Korean Notational Systems, Musical Notations of Korea, Korean Musicology Series 4 (Seoul: National Gugak Center, 2010), p.70. Gagokwollyu (1876),

¹⁰Korean Musicology Series Vol.5 (Seoul: National Gugak Center, 1981) p. 151

However, when teaching Gagok these days, Jeongganbo is used in an effort to show exact pitch and rhythm as below. <Figure 7> shows a song of Gagok called Eollk for female voice.

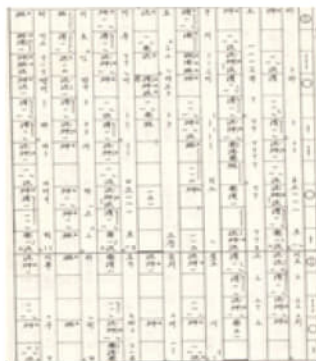


Figure 7. Current Gagok Score for Voice¹¹

Jeongganbo notation in <Figure 7> is consisted of 7 sets of two columns with words in the first one and pitches in the second, aside from the very first column (from the right side) which shows playing techniques of Janggu.

To summarize, in case of Geomungo classical music, Gu-eum is written in Jeongganbo with slight changes from the original version such as division of columns and subdivision of squares. Also, Gagok is notated in the same style of Jeongganbo.

III. Orality and Notation of Folk Music

In contrast to classical music, folk music was not written down, with the exception of several pieces in old notations such as Siyonghyangakbo (Current Local Music Notation) which was published to preserve and transmit local music in the 15-16th century. Among folk music genres, here, I will focus on a solo string or wind music called Sanjo, Janggu percussion music, and Pansori epic chant.

Sanjo was not written in any music notation in the 19th century when it was first created. Sanjo was rather formed with a basis on musical elements of Pansori and Sinawi (an instrumental ensemble music originally performed to accompany songs and dances in Shaman rituals). Playing Sanjo, the player used to express delicate feeling by change of modes, different combinations of techniques and ornaments in an improvisatory way. Nowadays, as folk music came to be taught in schools in the mid 20th century, Sanjo started to be notated. Since then, notation has usually been in use in teaching and learning Sanjo. In contrast to classical music, which is written in Jeongganbo, Sanjo is often written in Western staff notation, which became more prevalent in the mid 20th century. Gu-eum is sometimes written together in Western staff notation, to give more information characteristic of Korean traditional music and compensate for Western staff notation's impact, or defects that are standardization and fixation of performance style.¹²

In teaching folk percussion music such as Janggu, Gu-eum is more actively used. One of the reasons why Gu-eum is much more used for folk percussion instrumental music than for solo string or wind musical genre such as Sanjo could be that singing percussion Gu-eum is simpler than the one for Sanjo with changing pitches. For example, the Gu-eum of a folk rhythmic pattern called Gutgeori goes like "Deong – Gideok Kung Deoreoreoreo – Kung- Gideok Kung Deoreoreoreo –". Students memorize the Gu-eum and refer to notations provided when necessary. Janggu notations include a kind of new Jeongganbo in a horizontal format with the signs of playing techniques as below.



Figure 8. Janggu Notation of Gutgeori Rhythmic Pattern

In learning folk vocal forms such as Pansori where a professional singer, accompanied by a drummer, relates a long dramatic story with songs, speech, and action, score is not often used. If the singer performs a complete version

of a Pansori, it takes about six hours. Therefore, some teachers try to use Jeongganbo or Western staff notation when teaching it. However, it turns out that the notations are less used for Pansori than for solo instrumental music like Sanjo or for Gagok.

¹¹ Lee Yang-gyo, Gagokseonjip (Seoul: Yeongseong Printing Company, 1982), p.94.

¹² Lee Byongwon, Western Staff Notation and its Impact on Korean Musical Practice, Tongyangumak Vol.22, (Seoul: Asian Music Research Institute, Seoul National University, 2000) p.95.

To summarize, in case of Sanjo, Western staff notation is more used, but often with Gu-eum. Gu-eum is more actively used for folk percussion music education. And, Pansori still tends to be orally transmitted, though sometimes using Jeongganbo and Western staff notation, etc.

IV. Orality and Notation Comparison between Classical and Folk Music

Classical music has been written down in many different ways. Court music was regarded as a means of preserving and transmitting Confucian philosophy so that it could reinforce the social order of the Confucian state, Joseon Dynasty. Therefore, the state published notations of court music with fixed pitches and durations. Following Confucian idea of music, aristocrats learned how to play music to cultivate morality and character. Those literati learned music through Gu-eum from teachers and they wrote it down not to forget what they had learned. They used their own notation as a personal memorandum. Many of those Gu-eum notation appeared especially from the late 18th century with emerging middle class to the early 20th century. They didn't focus on recording the pitches and their time value only, but paid attention to how to express the tones of sound¹³.

At present, the classical music including court and aristocratic music such as certain Geomungo pieces and Gagok we have seen is notated often in Jeongganbo except when the music is free rhythm. Since rhythmic element is emphasized rather than melody in many Korean traditional music, Jeongganbo is an efficient tool to record it.

Folk music was transmitted through Gu-eum without music score because the folk musicians in general were illiterate. Since the 20th century, Sanjo, a representative folk instrumental music, began to be notated in Western staff notation, but often with Gu-eum. Even when reading Western staff notation of Sanjo, musicians tend not to read the transcription note by note but take it as a visual reference only. Also, while teaching students and having something to point out, teachers tend to show the example by singing phrases of Gu-deum. It is common both in teaching classical music and folk music. Gu-eum is very much used in teaching especially

folk percussion including Janggu, with different kinds of notations including Jeongganbo style notation.

Pansori still tends to be orally transmitted. It may be so since it has very delicate and complicated melody and rhythm, which makes a little difficult to use Jeongganbo or Western staff notation, etc. That may be one of the reasons why these days music creation tends to occur more in Korean folk vocal music such as Pansori than in classical vocal music, Gagok.

V. Conclusion

With orality and musical notation in coexistence, Gu-eum has been a strong method for both Korean classical and folk music transmission. Especially, in case of folk music, Gu-eum was the only way to transmit. Gu-eum is still actively used in teaching folk percussion music which is easier to sing because there is only rhythm, compared to Sanjo with changing pitches.

Notations of classical music such as old Jeongganbo and way of writing Gagok with only a few marks were not supposed to give fixed form to music. Rather, they were based on the idea that music score enables the player to play a variation and functions as a medium to keep it flexible to form a new piece. Though original Jeongganbo was changed to show musical elements more in detail, it still fits Korean traditional music of which rhythm is very much developed. It is also open to contain various musical elements such as Gu-eum.

In an effort to improve orality, there are some researches going on how to apply Gu-eum in school music curriculum and improve musicality of students. Although Western staff notation is preferred to Jeongganbo with Gu-eum in general education at school, Jeongganbo and Gu-geum still play important roles in training professional artists. Jeongganbo invented in the 15th century has been an aiding tool for transmitting music, in the sense that while the sound of the human voice disappears immediately after the singer stops and can not reach distant places, letters remain. The fact that we have Gu-eum and Jeongganbo alive elevates the value and level of Korean traditional music, which is a great intangible heritage of the world.

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