
INTRODUCTION

This book focuses on the seven instruments basic to Korean ensembles, devoting a single chapter to each: the *kōmun'go* six-stringed half-tube zither, *kayagŭm* 12-stringed half-tube zither, *haegŭm* two-stringed fiddle, *changgo* hourglass-shaped double-headed drum, *p'iri* oboe, *tanso* vertical notched flute and *taegŭm* transverse flute. It is primarily based on lessons, workshops and interviews that I have been privileged to take with leading Korean musicians, primarily in the years leading up to the first edition of this book, but also in the intervening years between then and now; I have listed those to whom I am particularly indebted above.

It would, of course, be possible to write a full volume on just one instrument, and, indeed, this has begun to be done by others. A certain amount of compression inevitably results from my decision to consider seven instruments rather than one. And, by selecting just seven instruments, some such as the *yanggŭm* dulcimer, *kkwaenggwari* small gong and *puk* barrel drum, must be relegated to a brief classificatory chapter. Again, space prevents a thorough account of Korea's musical history; I offer an initial chapter to give a brief overview, coupled to an overview of the notation systems that Koreans have used.

Today, it is quite likely that those visiting Korea who have an interest in Korean music will attend a few concerts. Those who stay for a few weeks may be offered lessons on an instrument. Such lessons, if held at the National Gugak Center or in a related place, will provide small notation booklets with repertory chosen from the court, literati, and folk traditions of old. My concentration here, then, is with the ‘core’ of music taught, rehearsed and performed at the Center, reflecting on its historical and contemporary position as the government-sponsored institute that maintains Korean traditional music. Some teachers, and an increasing number of scores and guides published in Korea, will concentrate on folksongs arranged for any of the instruments considered here, or, and somewhat worryingly to an ageing pedant such as me, will teach arrangements of *Auld Lang Syne* or a few other European and American melodies on the *haegŭm* fiddle or *kayagŭm* zither.

While attempting to be consistent in terms of the repertory I introduce for each instrument, I have attempted to allow for all eventualities by including a breadth of description. Note that throughout this book, I adopt the East Asian standard way of distinguishing the Confucian oriented ‘Great Tradition’ of the court and literati from the local and regional ‘Little Tradition’ of the folk: ‘court’, among Korean musicologists, covers music at state sacrificial rituals, music belonging to the former court, and a tradition associated with the literati and with a so-called ‘middle class’ (*chungin*) of merchants, scribes, and teachers that emerged during the middle to late Chosŏn dynasty; ‘folk’ includes folksongs, shaman ritual music, but, unlike the association in, say, Europe, it also incorporates semi-professional and professional genres such as *p’ansori* epic storytelling through song and *sanjo* ‘scattered melodies’ for solo melodic instrument and drum. In other words, many professional musicians (and dancers) have worked within the ‘folk’ category, as part of the *min’gan*, the people outside the court and literati elite.

After a chapter exploring music history and notation and a chapter that provides a catalogue of Korean instrument, the remaining chapters each focus on a single

instrument. Each follows a similar pattern: after an overview, I offer a historical sketch, with brief mention of comparative instruments where such information is useful, then explore the role of the instrument in Korean musical life. Then, I give details of construction and playing techniques, moving to a consideration of different types of notation, including verbal notations (*kuŭm*). Finally, I provide a list of some of the scores and guides for the instrument that are available; I list the materials in Korean script, since this is the only way that students will be able to ask shop assistants or librarians for them. In keeping with the post-1945 history of the Center, I start my account of each instrument from the court and literati tradition, and build to notations of *Seryŏngsan* and *T'aryŏng*, two pieces from the literati suite *Yŏngsan hoesang* that every student of Korean music is likely to learn. Exercises are given for a number of instruments that are designed to build fluency prior to attempting these two pieces. For the *changgo* hourglass-shaped drum I offer a rather different treatment, exploring the drum's ubiquity as an accompanying instrument, and illustrating how a solo repertory for it has developed.

With the advent of many developed instruments—*kaeryang* (improved) is the standard Korean descriptor—students may find themselves offered lessons on modern instruments rather than more traditional versions. My feeling, and that of most musicians I have spoken to, is that development has often required compromise. Using polyester or nylon strings on a zither, for instance, limits the ornamentation that can be used, while retuning a zither to a diatonic scale makes it impossible to match the pentatonic tuning of an old instrument. A student is well advised to start with the long-established version of a traditional instrument. An exception applies in respect to contemporary composition, where a composer may design a piece for a specific instrument, such as the recently introduced 25-stringed *kayagŭm* zither rather than its traditional 12-stringed equivalent. I fully understand the challenges that a *kayagŭm* player now faces if they have to maintain a number of different instruments. The expansion of choice that has come with the sheer number of instrument developments and modifications of the last

few decades is amazing to contemplate, but it is not yet possible to predict what compositions, or for that matter what new version of an instrument, will stand the test of time.

In Korea, the expectation is that a budding student will work with a teacher, hence instrument teaching workbooks tend to lack precise playing techniques, lists of ornamentation, and indications of how to make a piece become music rather than just a sequence of notes. The assumption, though, that a non-Korean student will be able to learn directly from a teacher, with instruments and makers close at hand, is misplaced. Korean musicians used rote learning methods until recent times. Even as notations have become common, so a teacher has remained vitally important, and students will typically meet several times in a week. It is, then, relatively unimportant for scores used in such training to provide detailed prescriptions of ornamentation or to iron out all potential ambiguities. Some scores use the Western five-line stave that inadequately renders intonation and ornamentation. Some use a Korean mensural system, *chǒngganbo*, but some of these trans-notate to *chǒngganbo* from existing staff notations. Scores, broadly stated, mark the move of Korean traditional music into universities, and the rise of musicology, both as an academic discipline and as part of the research and dissemination activities of the National Gugak Center. The latter, known in Korean as the Kungnip Kugagwǒn, is the successor to court institutes dating back some 1200 years. The current institution opened its doors in Pusan during the Korean civil war, and was initially known in English as the National Classical Music Institute. Its English name changed in the 1980s to ‘Korean Traditional Performing Arts Centre’, then to ‘National Korean Traditional Performing Arts Centre’, before the current name was adopted in 2008.

Today, there is a considerable amount of material on Korean music available in English, but the only materials on instruments consist on one hand of rapid run-throughs that are little more than simple introductions, and on the other of lavish government-sponsored workbooks that hardly cover the more academic side of things. The choice is largely between a lack of depth or a lack of research. In Korean, but

with a portion translated into English, the most comprehensive volume on instruments to date is Song Hyejin's *Han'guk Akki/Korean Musical Instruments* (2000). Song assembles a wealth of historical information and provides lavish and expensive illustrations in what is a weighty tome that should most certainly reside in many libraries. Hers, though, is not a practical guide. Again, most of the recent discussions of instruments have not extended far beyond earlier musicological texts, among the latter the most significant being the publications of Chang Sahun (1916 - 1991). I have found, then, that the references given in the first edition of *Korean Musical Instruments* are, on the whole, still valid. However, the huge quantity of musicological and practical material available in Korean does not come without its own challenges, one of which is for me to provide sufficient information for those who have little or no access to Korean musicians and teachers while at the same time providing this information in a manner that will be acceptable to Korean colleagues.

Historical artefacts relating to instruments in Korea remain limited. Some archaeological finds relating to instruments are still being explored, and details of many of these have been included here which were not in the first edition of *Korean Musical Instruments* back in 1988. The Shōsōin repository at Nara, Japan, houses an important and well preserved collection of Korean instruments. The repository holds the paintings, masks, ornaments, and instruments collected by Emperor Shōmu, who ruled Nara from 724 to 749. After his death, the collection was dedicated to the Buddha of the Tōdaiji, and it has been housed at Shōsōin since 756.

Because my approach is primarily to work with Korean musicians, I limit my consideration of history, and cite historical texts largely through secondary materials. Korea's historical texts tend to be taken at face value by many Korean musicologists. But, many written texts were compiled by those close to the court, often omitting or denigrating rural music genres, or were written retrospectively, many centuries after the activities that they describe, and when the philosophical and political situation had changed. I have added some comparisons to instruments in neighbouring countries that

are generally not given in Korean publications. I do this to help clarify the history and development of instruments in Korea: was the ‘disappearance’ of a second thumb hole on the *p’iri* oboe, for example, really undertaken by a Korean king, as Korean accounts maintain, several centuries after the hole was abandoned on instruments in China? How much does the legend about the development of the *kōmun’go* six-stringed zither reflect Chinese ideas about zithers?

Conventions

As with most publications by foreign scholars on Korea, I use the McCune-Reischauer romanisation system for Korean terms, as modified by the Korean Ministry of Education in 1988 (‘shi’ rather than ‘si’, to reflect pronunciation). The system has a high degree of accuracy, and my reason for using it is to allow materials I cite to be found in library collections and recorded music archives around the world. However, at the request of my publisher, I have incorporated Korean script (한글) into the reference list, and also for the list of selected scores and guides given in each chapter. Although I render personal names given in Korean in published sources in McCune-Reischauer, without hyphenation, I have respected preferred spellings of personal names and organisation titles where these are printed, or where they are known through compositions, publications, or recordings. Where it facilitates cross-checking I add McCune-Reischauer equivalents in square brackets in the reference list. ‘Seoul’ is the accepted romanisation for the South Korean capital, and ‘Pyongyang’ for the North Korean capital.

Like most non-Korean scholars, I remain reluctant to use the romanisation system that has been promoted from Seoul during the last decade. I do not dispute that this system works for Koreans, but it relies on syllabry that too often has unfortunate connotations for those brought up speaking European languages, with the effect that it can undermine efforts to promote Korea to an international audience. I

also note that there is as yet little consistency in the use of the ‘new’ Korean romanisation, not least since there are a number of other systems still circulating. Individually preferred spellings of personal names may follow any one of the systems that has existed during the last 50 years, and, to complicate matters further, a composer or author may use several different romanised versions of their name, with or without hyphenating the second and third syllables.

Musical Orthography

Korean tuning systems do not easily fit the Western tempered scale. Until the Japanese occupation of Korea at the beginning of the twentieth century, staff notation was little known in Korea, but today there are hundreds of published versions of *sanjo*, thousands of folksong transcriptions and arrangements, and staff notation scores for just about all the court and literati repertory. Some scores, such as Yi Chaesuk’s for *kayagŭm sanjo*, are primarily intended as teaching tools and can be considered prescriptive, while others, such as the veritable *Han’guk ũmak/Anthology of Korean Music* series published by the National Gugak Center, are descriptive, in that they are designed to document authoritative performances. As a general rule, Korean perceptions of ornamentation incorporate aesthetic elements that are often not part of the sound actually heard; at the same time, some ornaments are rarely notated. The result is that staff notations, including those in this book, steer a perilous path; some are more prescriptive (such as notations of folksongs for *kayagŭm* zither in Chapter 3) and some are descriptive (such as the notation of *p’iri* oboe *shinawi* in Chapter 7).

Korean musicians feel the correct pitch on any given occasion, and this pitch will vary from day to day. Although the *p’yŏn’gyŏng* stone lithophones give the tuning for state sacrificial rituals, and given the characteristic of stone this can be considered a constant, elsewhere, in both ensembles and orchestras, the *taegŭm* transverse flute gives the pitch *im* for every other instrument to be tuned to. The *taegŭm* is an

instrument made from bamboo, with an oversize blowing hole that allows the player considerable leeway and variation as they sound a pitch. The reason for using it is because it links music to nature and to the cosmos – this, more than its ability to produce a constant pitch in the day-to-day different atmospheric and performance situations. Time, too, is felt rather than measured against the clock. Slow music, therefore, tends to be counted in terms of breath lengths. Consequently, where a metronome marking is given in any Korean notation, this should be treated as a guide rather than a precise measurement. The notation of rhythm gives rise to further difficulties, and generally here I follow conventions set down by Robert Provine following many Korean scholars – as outlined in Chapter 1 and Chapter 6. Korean music was not designed to fit the time signatures of Western staff notation, but nonetheless I feel that it does so quite well, because it tends to be based on repeating metric rhythmic cycles (*changdan*).

Seryŏngsan and *T'aryŏng*, the two pieces given at the back of this book in Korean *chŏngganbo* notation for six of the seven major instruments, come from the literati chamber suite *Yŏngsan hoesang*. Outside of Seoul, this is typically known as *Chul p'ungnyu* or *Hyangje chul p'ungnyu*, and it is preserved as Important Intangible Cultural Property (*Chungyo muhyŏng munhwajae*) 83. Within Seoul, and particularly when encountered at the National Gugak Center or in musicological scholarship, it is known as *Yŏngsan hoesang*, taking the first four syllables of a seven syllable text, *Yŏngsan hoesang pulbosal* – ‘Mass to the Buddha in spiritual mountain’ – that appears alongside one of the first historical notations of part of the suite. That notation is in the *Taeak hubo*, dating to 1759 but considered to record practise some 200 years earlier. The text has led scholars to assume that the suite evolved from a sung piece, although it is now purely instrumental.

Yŏngsan hoesang is a chamber suite played in several versions. Each version comprises a set of movements that gradually increase in pace as they merge into each other without any discernable breaks. The suite opens with *Sangyŏngsan*, and each

movement is either a variation on this slow piece or descends from elsewhere, either from elsewhere in the court repertory (*Samhyŏn todŭri*, *Haŭhyŏn todŭri*) or from other repertory (*T'aryŏng*). The suite has both the slowest and fastest pieces in the court and literati repertory, *Sangyŏngsan* and *Kunak*, its first and last pieces. *Seryŏngsan* (*se* = slender), also known as *Chanyŏngsan* (*chan* = short) is a condensed variation on the preceding piece in the suite, *Chungyŏngsan*, played at a faster tempo (about 45 beats a minute!); *Chungyŏngsan* is itself a variation of the first piece in the suite, *Sangyŏngsan*. *Seryŏngsan* marks the point at which the pace begins to pick up, as the drum pattern begins to take on a degree of rhythmic vitality. It is built around a ten-beat rhythmic cycle, and the melody, together with its substantial ornamentation, begins to approach something that could be sung. *T'aryŏng*, which is the penultimate movement in the suite, has a lilting metrical structure that subdivides into four groups each of three beats, much in keeping with its possible origins as an archaic dance. The last beat in each group is lightly accented. *T'aryŏng* is announced by a slowing down at the end of the previous piece, *Yŏmbul todŭri*, and passes straight on to *Kunak*, itself a variant of *T'aryŏng*, the only piece in the suite to introduce a sixth pitch, *ko* (g).

Following Korean teaching practice, *Seryŏngsan* and *T'aryŏng* notations for the *kayagŭm* 12-stringed zither, *tanso* vertical notched flute and *taegŭm* transverse flute are given from the *Chunggwang chigok* version of the suite and notations for *kŏmun'go* six-stringed zither, *haegŭm* two-stringed fiddle and *p'iri* oboe are from the *Yuch'oshin chigok* version. The difference is basically that *Yuch'oshin chigok* is pitched a perfect fourth lower than *Chunggwang chigok*.