

Introduction

Reflections on the Significance of Place for East Asian Music

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Understandings of Place

To the celebrated humanist geographer, Yi-fu Tuan, music is valuable to both geography and humanity for expressing our experience of place, and for ‘making public our innermost feelings’ (cited in Lack 2015: 8). Tuan considers music as significant for articulating the experience of place, and for allowing geographers to better understand how place is felt – thus making a connection between music and place relevant to the discipline of geography. In contrast, the many studies of music and place from within ethnomusicology and elsewhere in the humanities have tended to consider the significance of the connection through investigating how music gives expression to, or is influenced by, place. They have long demonstrated the significance of place in relation to specific musical cultures (for example, in Levin and Süzükei 2006), and have often explored musical connections to a rooted homeland or to a concept of home filtered through experience in the diaspora (Reyes 1999; Marsh 2013). Although acknowledging the significance of place as a concept, few ethnomusicologists have interrogated place itself in depth.

Considering music’s relation to place can often seem straightforward. This may be because, as Cresswell notes, ‘place is a word that seems to speak for itself’ (2015: 1). The celebrated anthropologist Clifford Geertz, in a late-twentieth-century ‘Afterword’, even notes the lack of specific analytical attention given to the concept within his discipline, writing that, in standard anthropological textbooks and monographs,

Even if a fair amount of attention is given to something called ‘the environment’ or ‘the physical setting’ (rainfall, vegetation, fauna, landforms), ‘place’ as an analytical or descriptive concept, explicitly set out and formally developed, does not appear. Something that is a dimension of everyone’s existence, the intensity of where we are, passes by anonymous and unremarked. It goes without saying.

(Geertz 1996: 259)

Geertz may well be reflecting the situation at the time he was writing. Indeed, in many ethnomusicological analyses, particularly in the years leading up to the

new millennium, place was commonly interpreted in a relatively straightforward and literal sense as a physical location, and as such it was not extensively interrogated. Such attention to place nevertheless allowed it to have correspondence with the first two of three features of place that political geographer John Agnew (1987) identified within a relatively static formulation: location, locale, and sense of place. However, for many geographers, the various meanings associated with location have long been regarded as also important in defining place. Hence, Tuan notes in his seminal *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*:

What begins as undifferentiated space becomes places as we get to know it better and endow it with value ... The ideas 'space' and 'place' require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place.

(Tuan 1977: 6)

Or, as Cresswell (2014: 4) puts it, Tuan's classic definition of place can be summarized as 'a portion of space that has accumulated particular meanings at both the level of the individual and the social'.

Over time, understandings of place have become more nuanced. By the 1990s, one of the major analytical trajectories was a consideration of the sensory aspects of the nature of place; the sensory dimension is one of the two major strands of geographic inquiry that Hubbard (2005: 41) identifies within recent work on place. Work in this dimension proved particularly significant for music, and was conveyed and explored vividly through Steven Feld and Keith Basso's rich collection, *Senses of Place* (1996) – for which Geertz wrote the afterword. There, Geertz notes that 'the anthropology of place ... can fairly be said to have been launched as a sustained and self-conscious enterprise in these pages (as a diffuse, unthematized concern, a sort of background continuo, it has, of course, been around much longer)' (1996: 262). Feld's innovative analysis of music-place sensuousness in Bosavi within this same volume demonstrates just how important the senses are to establishing and understanding music and place connections. And, Feld notes in his conclusion, 'Places make sense in good part because of how they are made sensual and how they are sensually voiced' (Feld 1996: 134).

Today, the significance of meaning and feeling associated with place is very widely accepted. However, place itself, in the sense of 'location' or 'locale', is not always conceptualized as a physical entity; indeed, Heise (2008) critiques the localist emphasis of much environmentalism. A spiritual sense of place may be indicated, or place may be expressed and experienced through musical memory and nostalgia, while virtual dimensions of place may be discussed, such as its function as an internet bridgespace (after Adams and Ghose 2003; Tettey 2009) where home and diaspora, or the local and the global, intersect and interweave. Cresswell (2008: 138), again, notes that the introduction of both fixed and mobile

technologies has led geographers to recast notions of place, and to consider links between mediated and ‘real’ places. We can also note that there is an increasing acknowledgement of the blurriness of boundaries of cultural expression and how these make studies that approach music-place connections on a wider level increasingly important, while also complicating how place is considered to exist or to be relevant. Timothy Rice, in ‘Time, Place, and Metaphor in Musical Experience and Ethnomusicology’, observes how there is a growing understanding in ethnomusicology that ‘our and our subjects’ experiences are no longer contained within local, isolated cultures, or even within nation-states, but are and have been shaped by regional, area, colonial and global economics, politics, social relations and images’ (2003: 160). Yet despite such complexities, it remains clear that,

Place is how we make the world meaningful and how we experience the world. Place, at a basic level, is space invested with meaning in the context of power. This process of investing space with meaning happens across the globe at all scales, and has done throughout human history.

(Cresswell 2015: 19)

Syncretic Approaches to Place

The various explorations of place and its relationship with musical traditions in East Asia contained within this volume confirm that place has, indeed, invested space with meaning for a long period, but that area-focussed approaches find distinct and at times different aspects relevant to each case study. This would seem to be consistent with the difficulties – and impracticalities – faced by human geographers in precisely defining ‘place’, particularly following the range of recent analytical trends touched upon briefly here. These difficulties have led some geographers to advocate syncretic approaches. In his chapter for the *SAGE Handbook of Geography*, Cresswell offers what he himself describes as a ‘syncretic theoretical framework for the analysis and interpretation of place’ (2014: 4), and intentionally leaves his thoughts open-ended, encouraging readers to ‘draw a diverse array of possible readings that may inform their own approaches to place’ (2014: 4). Nicole M. Ardoin, in ‘Toward an Interdisciplinary Understanding of Place: Lessons for Environmental Education’, presents a similarly syncretic framework where a multidimensional sense of place is achieved through the interaction of specific elements within a particularly biophysical setting that provides context for all interactions (2006: 114). She represents these interactions through a helpful diagram of three overlapping circles within a single larger circle. The larger circle represents the biophysical setting; the three small circles represent psychological (individual), sociocultural, and political and economic elements; and the centre of the diagram where the three inside circles overlap represents a multidimensional sense of place.

Cresswell (2014: 6–9) notes that the notion of gathering and interweaving has a powerful presence within the study of place in human geography whilst also having particular appeal in area studies. His explanation of this understanding of

place ‘as a gathering of materialities, meanings and practices’ (2014: 6) offers a useful framework for thinking about the connections between music and place outlined by the contributors to the current volume. It is reflected also in Beverley Diamond’s masterful ‘Afterword’ to the influential anthology *Performing Gender, Place and Emotion in Music: Global Perspectives*, where she likewise notes that ‘the framing of place is necessarily varied in different contexts’ (Diamond 2013: 188), going on to describe the many different ways in which ‘place’ interrelates with gender and emotion in the case studies contained in the volume. As Edward Casey explains,

places gather things in their midst – where ‘things’ connote various animate and inanimate entities. Places also gather experiences and histories, even languages and thoughts ... the power belongs to place itself, and it is a power of gathering.

(1996: 24)

The notion of gathering and the resultant dynamism can provide helpful ways of thinking about how place interweaves with the many cultural flows of East Asia, pulling in certain directions at certain times, and emphasizing certain aspects in particular contexts. The notion of weaving also allows us to consider textured aspects of place in a manner that recognizes that its ‘distinctive qualities may be profound’ (Adams, Hoelscher and Till 2001: xiii).

Many of the studies featured in this volume illustrate the value of considering place as being textured, or as a gathering or interweaving of experiences, histories, and other entities, in understanding connections between music and place. For instance, Terauchi’s exploration of *gagaku* in a Shinto festival in Nara, de Ferranti’s study of *biwa*, and Ong’s discussion of *kunqu* in Suzhou, show how memories and historical records of place interweave with the present through the lens of music, pulling together certain elements in different webs of interconnection. Within several chapters that consider issues of repertoire and canonization – including for the *pipa* (by Liu), for the *shakuhachi* (by Day), and for North and South Korean musical soundworlds broadly considered (by Howard) – we can observe that place is shaped by and interrelates with music through various interwoven factors including the actions of individuals and communities; identification with region or nation; and movement of music between different social contexts or strata.

In other chapters that follow, textured qualities of place gather more strongly through connections to the natural landscape, language, and associated cultural memory – as, for example, in the studies on Yangzi delta *shan’ge* (by McLaren) and on music in Tibet (Roche). Much research where place is heavily influenced by ideas of the local environment touches also on the associated field of ecomusicology (see, for example, Allen 2011; Titon 2013; Allen and Dawe 2015; Edwards 2018). Teoh contextualizes the experience of place in a geographical sense as this intersects with ethnicity among Taiwan’s indigenous peoples, while for several other contributors, it is a gathering of elements of place around physical aspects

of the built environment and its historical significance – for instance, performance spaces for Korean *kugak* (Finchum-Sung) and for performances of musical modernity in early and mid-late twentieth-century South Korea (Kim, Maliangkay).

Place as a Way of Seeing, Hearing, Researching, and Writing

In understanding place as something which has texture, consists of interwoven elements, and is a locus of gathering, we implicitly acknowledge the importance of context and, by extension, the subjectivity inherent in understanding the contextual features of this concept. As Cresswell notes, ‘In other words, place is not simply something to be observed, researched and written about but is itself part of the way we see, research and write’ (Cresswell 2015: 24). In this, understandings of place within human geography have certain parallels with the reflexive turn in anthropology and ethnomusicology since the 1990s. But rather than it being the researcher’s identity or subjective positioning that can impact upon the study, it is their being at a particular locus of elements that form ‘place’ which brings to bear upon how we understand and express ideas about all places.

Some of the following studies involve more explicit handling of this issue than others. One example is Roche’s study of the intersection between music, the multiple languages of Tibet, and place, wherein his perspective is necessarily located outside the mainstream of both Tibetan and mainstream Chinese understandings, and how such an intersection permeates his discussion. Ingram similarly presents a view of place and music connections in Kam minority music from southwestern China that concords more with two dimensions of place that are both located outside the Han Chinese cultural centre: first, that of Kam people themselves, who have for centuries been viewed in China as primarily being geographically distant from China’s sociopolitical centre; and, second, of a researcher looking outwards to understand how place is felt and experienced. Of course, it would be erroneous to suggest that geographical or cultural location beyond the mainstream of each of these cases necessarily produces a more ‘objective’ analysis. However, it could certainly be said that each researcher’s location promotes a particular way of viewing the world and listening to the music of the world. Turning to Cresswell again, ‘Place then is both a (real) thing in the (real) world and a way of thinking about the world that foregrounds the geographical rather than the social, natural or cultural’ (Cresswell 2014: 7).

The Presence of Place

The historian, philosopher, and theorist Ethan Kleinberg offers a useful summation of thinking around the concept of ‘presence’, a notion which we use in the title of this book to indicate the dimensions related to place that are conveyed through sound. Kleinberg points out that ‘there are differing ideas at play as to how the past presses into the present and the scope of the “presence effect”: that is, the non-proximate presence of persons, of moods, of environment’ (Kleinberg 2013: 1). For geographers, too, place is linked to presence in an evocative way;

as Cresswell explains, ‘Places have a material presence ... but places have more of a material presence than just their landscape’ (2014: 9). The non-materiality of music allows it to convey a presence that permeates strongly the places through which it is associated, or to convey those places in other ways, providing space for their interrelated aspects to emerge, take shape, and exist with a degree of power that belies music’s intangible nature.

Place and the Music of East Asia

Our topic is clearly broad and, we argue, has been somewhat neglected in the literature. Here, each chapter explores a specific genre or topic rather than presenting an overview, and we group chapters together geographically. In the main, our considerations address longer-standing musical traditions although the contributions by Howard, Roche, and Teoh all include explorations of contemporary popular genres. Given the many and diverse links between music, sound, and place, we can find no reason to impose an overarching theory, hence we traverse wide and divergent spaces, utilizing ethnographic data and narratives. Our heterogeneous approaches illustrate the richness of understandings of place, and offer a corrective against attempts to generalize.

We open with considerations of the People’s Republic of China. Catherine Ingram explores how Kam (in Chinese, Dong) minority big song singing in China’s southwest has long had an important role in presenting and transmitting culture and identity, and consequently exhibits intimate connections to localized conceptions of place. Following the so-called ‘discovery’ of Kam big song singing in the mid-twentieth century, big song began to be used to in discussions of long-challenged evolutionary theories to demonstrate that Chinese music was not all monophonic, and thereby came to be identified with the entire Chinese nation. However, huge social change, the recognition of big song as intangible cultural heritage, and more, has expanded and shifted connections between music and place, both within and beyond Kam communities. Likewise, Anne E. McLaren takes us to song-cycles sung on Lake Tai and along its waterways in the lower Yangzi delta region. These are rich in the sense of natural habitat and, consequently, entextualize place as the site of cultural memory. McLaren shows how narrative song traditions, stemming from songs known as *shan’ge* (mountain songs) once sung by illiterate populations in rice paddies or while journeying by boat around the lakes and waterways, articulate indelible senses of place and identity that encapsulate how communities construct and interpret the environment in which they live.

Third, Min Yen Ong explores the southeastern *kunqu* genre, part of China’s widespread and very diverse opera traditions. She explores how sustaining heritage balances and manages competing values in performance and promotion, facilitated through takes on history and aesthetics that underpin productions, tourism events, and learning methodologies. She analyses how *Kunqu* is associated with Suzhou as a region and a place, and how music provides important, emotive, but

different narratives for tourists and a local population. She contrasts the creation of place through top-down preservation efforts with the sense of place and collectivity felt among elderly amateur practitioners. Places are shown to be sites of contestation, involving memories to evoke and memories to forget. The pillars of local and national, though, have been joined by institutional training, and this leads to our fourth chapter, in which Lu Liu explores how place has impacted on the development of a single instrument, the *pipa* lute. While in previous centuries the *pipa* was taught within different regional schools it is now part of conservatoire training and is performed on urban stages. The cosmopolitan influence of Beijing on the *pipa* is reflected in educational, social, and historical factors, and Liu explores four key *pipa* figures – Liu Tianhua, Lin Shicheng, Liu Dehai, and Zhang Qiang – none of whom were born in Beijing, but for all of whom Beijing plays or played a central role in their careers.

We resist the politics of place. However, Chapters 5 and 6 move westwards and eastwards, respectively. First, Gerald Roche looks at links between place, song, and language in Tibet, examining how music is represented in the constructions of popular forms, and how this impacts on the maintenance of social diversity – specifically, linguistic diversity. Tibet is linguistically diverse but culturally integrated, and song has played a crucial role in this integration, to the extent that many speakers of non-Tibetic minority languages across the plateau have traditionally sung in Tibetan, making Tibetan a common sung – rather than spoken – language. Roche shows how pop songs imagine place and space in terms of a national geobody – a bounded, internally homogenous unit – but how this has been refracted as linguistic minorities, rather than singing themselves into a place, sing their own alienation from that geobody, and use song not as a medium of exchange between diverse peoples but as a shibboleth for national belonging and boundary marking. Contrasting Roche, Yang-Ming Teoh discusses how diverse Taiwanese indigenous music has and is used to create a multicultural, localized identity shared across Taiwan. The main essences of the indigenous character, based on place and space and referred to as a culture of mountain and sea (or island and ocean), is harnessed in a continuum running from an open attitude which endorses internationalism, universalism, and globalization, to an appeal to seclusion in which local and traditional values rooted in Austronesian, Formosan, and Taiwanese forms are promoted. Policy and practice, and people's attitudes, fluctuate from one to the other, and are seen in pop culture's transcultural engagements, in local and national celebrations, and through efforts to revive and reinvigorate indigenous traditions without resorting to the fossilization inherent in much preservation.

Four chapters consider Korea. First, Howard challenges assumptions about 'Korean music', reconciling the sense of tradition inherent in *kugak* – Korean traditional music as it has become the internationally iconic soundworld of South Korea – with the internally representative 'popular' songs of North Korea, where socialist realism meets the local monolithic ideology of *juche* through ideologically sound lyrics. Today, the sonic representation of a country has much to do with a mediatized iconicity fashioned both by temporality and by the politics of

representation, and Howard argues the two competing soundworlds in the two competing Korean states constitute different resolutions to shared experiences of colonialism, war, and subsequent rebuilding. Second, Hee-sun Kim zooms in on how music within the ‘folk’ category came to mark *kugak* during the twentieth century. She delineates how connections between place and genre have been understood and constructed differently over time, reflecting the performance, broadcasting, and musicological contexts in which they were framed. Regional identity became embedded in the formation of *kugak* as a category, but within this the (South) Korean capital, Seoul, played a central role, since that was where Westernized concert stages, broadcasting, recording industries, and tertiary-level education grew. From Seoul, regional genres were projected nationwide, fixing the relationships between music and place.

Third, Hilary Finchum-Sung considers the role of physical space in framing performances of *kugak*. Occupying an underdog position within the domestic music market but contributing to a core Korean aesthetic, *kugak* has been deemed to require spaces distinct from those of Western theatres and concert halls. Acoustic spaces have thus become meaningful, and ongoing debates about amplification (or its absence), and about ideal stage materials and design, reveal (and revere) ideas about authenticity. As Finchum-Sung explores acoustic designs for *kugak*, she notes how the act of performance draws performers and audiences alike into an interpretive space, thereby contributing to a Korean socio-historic sonic experience that reveals ontologies which connect to *kugak*’s struggle for sustainability in the modern world. From here, fourth, Roald Maliangkay returns us to an earlier space, the Walker Hill Resort, which opened its doors in 1962 and aimed, with government support, to persuade wealthy foreigners to holiday in Korea. The resort, built on a mountainside in Seoul’s eastern suburbs, became known for its risqué live shows that broke with Korea’s conservative morality. Despite existing at a distance from the mainstream of cultural production for Koreans, Walker Hill shows had profound influences on Korean music, launching the careers of many stars and developing choreographed staged versions of traditional repertoires.

Next, we travel across the contested waters of Korea’s East Sea (or, Sea of Japan). Historically, the court music of Japan, *gagaku*, was transmitted from China (but incorporating repertoires considered Korean and Vietnamese), with Korea acting as both a nurturing ground and as the bridge from continental East Asia to the Japanese archipelago. The links, themselves profoundly influencing notions of place, have long been studied, notably by the ‘Picken school’ – by Laurence Picken (1909–2007) and his students and associates (Howard 2014: 337–60) – and also by many Asian scholars (see, e.g. Zhao 2012). In Chapter 11, Naoko Terauchi offers an analysis of a Shinto festival in Nara, a city listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage site, and its showcasing of *gagaku* and other performing arts from ancient and mediaeval times (including *dengaku*, *mikokagura*, *sarugaku (noh)*, and *seinoo*). The festival, *Kasuga wakamiya onmatsuri*, hosted by the Kasuga-Taisha Shrine, has been held annually since the early

twelfth century, but struggled to survive social changes brought by the 1868 Meiji Restoration. As its sponsoring temple lost power, volunteer priests and common people were allowed to execute its parts. Its parade, the *Owatari-shiki*, was re-routed to take in the commercial downtown and the new railway stations, and to satisfy the tourist gaze, but each place continues to inseparably connect to specific performances, while the arrangements of performances convey social – and at times political – meanings.

In Chapter 12, Hugh de Ferranti considers the *biwa*, a short-necked lute related to the Chinese *pipa* with a history in Japan of more than 1000 years. Although associations with ancient court culture and blind narrative singers remain important, repertoires commonly heard today derive from musical recitation traditions developed in regions of Kyushu from the eighteenth century onwards. Ties to the former Satsuma domain were important in Tokyo by the 1880s, and continued to be so for old-school players. Although one style, the *chikuzenbiwa*, was developed at the end of the nineteenth century in northern Kyushu, Kyushu practice had little relevance after it was brought to Tokyo, as is clear in the *Kinshinryū*, a new Tokyo school that then gained nationwide popularity. When *biwa* music was first carried abroad, it signified Imperial Japan, the heartland of an empire, home to what ended in calamity in 1945. De Ferranti tracks back and forward, exploring how the 1960s Tokyo avant-garde gave the *biwa* a new aesthetic presence in instrumental, vocal, and multi-media works, and how some contemporary musicians are innovatively exploring new narrative spaces. Finally, Kiku Day turns to a second iconic Japanese instrument, the *shakuhachi*, looking at a specific example, the *Nezasa-ha kinpūryū*. This originated at a Fuke sect temple far from the centre: during the Edo period, as the *honkyoku* (often translated as ‘original pieces’) were created and became a classical repertoire, up to 77 Fuke sect temples were scattered around Japan. Identifications with place may relate to a temple location, to natural features of a region, or even to the bamboo from which instruments are fashioned, but modern life takes players who represent and transmit a certain style away from a given locality while leaving many lineage holders in rural areas struggling. Again, pieces from a specific locality travel as they are incorporated into the repertoires of mainstream groups in urban settings. Using the idea of collective memory, and the Japanese concept of *furusato*, Day explores how identification with place is constructed and reconstructed when repertoire is performed far from its origins.

Taken together, our contributors show how place is embedded in songs and in instrumental repertoires, in rituals and festivals, and is part of historical and political legacies. Place is interpreted at specific points in time. Economic activity, urbanization, commodification and commercialization, as well as national and international migration, both remove and reinforce perceptions pertaining to the relationships between music and place. And, while identifications within music with place often reflect issues that have contemporary resonance, they may also be used, implicitly or explicitly, to establish or maintain a musician’s – or an audience’s – place in the world. With this, we return to Cresswell, who states that

it makes no sense to dissolve place entirely into a set of flows and connections (2014: 20). What, he asks, does this leave for geographers (and others) to do? One answer would be a renewed practice of place-writing, and as Cresswell critiques how the tradition of regional geography from the first half of the twentieth century became moribund and parochial in its flat descriptiveness, he asks whether it is possible to start again, offering more than description, resisting the reification of places to roots or routes, to materiality or practice, to presentation or the non-representational, and providing detailed interweavings of theory and empirics in order to better understand the ongoing process of *becoming* place. This, in respect to East Asian music, is what we attempt to provide here.

Conventions

The romanizations used in this volume are as follows: pinyin for Chinese terms and names, for both Republic of China and People's Republic of China discussions (with romanizations for the Republic of China based on Mandarin pronunciation); Hepburn for Japanese; McCune-Reischauer for Korean, using the 1988 modifications of the Korean Ministry of Education (including '*shi*' rather than '*si*' to reflect pronunciation). An exception applies to personal names: names given in Chinese, Japanese, or Korean in published sources are rendered using the above romanization systems, with family name first and, with the exception of Taiwanese names, without hyphenation; but, we respect preferred spellings of personal names where the publication is in English or another European language, where an author (or musician) is well known beyond East Asia, or where an author has communicated a clear preference. For the chapters featuring less widely spoken languages – Kam and various Tibetan languages – Ingram and Roche briefly comment within their chapters on the romanization systems employed.

Where appropriate, we adjust the grammar of interview quotations in the belief that everyone we converse with has the right for their words to be rendered adequately. Titles of musical works, pieces, or recordings are given in parentheses, with the romanized Chinese, Korean, Japanese, or Tibetan preceding an English translation or transliteration where appropriate or needed. English translations of East Asian works are given only where these are provided in the original. A note about the East Asian concept of 'folk' and 'court': 'folk', as the Little Tradition, is in East Asian usage separated from the court, aristocratic/gentry and literati 'high' or 'classical' Great Tradition (Bauman 1992: xiii–xxi; see also Redfield 1956). This usage, which will be regularly encountered in this volume, reflects its relative prevalence in East Asia. Such usage can perpetuate a definition in which 'folk music' is (or was) the product of an orally transmitted tradition that has been selected and utilized by an identifiable community but which is likely to have local or individual variations and be presented by amateur rather than professional musicians. Just as this presents myriad problems, so there are many problems with the term 'tradition', a term which continues to have widespread – but regionally

distinct – utility in East Asia, due not least to the region’s long and distinguished historical legacy. ‘Traditional’ may also apply to court and literati musics, but in respect to the frequent correlation between ‘folk’ and ‘traditional’, it is perhaps no accident to recall that the International Folk Music Council changed its name to the International Council for Traditional Music at its first ever meeting in East Asia – in Seoul – in 1981.