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Music Exchanges Between Korea and

Central Asia in Ancient Times

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1. Introduction: Issues of Influence and Acceptance of Foreign Music

Korea has had a continual exchange of culture with her neighbors throughout history; so too has Korean music. Present Korean music originated in the Three Kingdoms period of Koguryo 高句麗 (7 B.C- A.D. 668), Paekche 百濟 (18 B.C.-A.D. 660), and Silla 新羅 (5 B. C.- A.D. 935). This music was in close relationship with the musical culture of her immediate neighbor, China, and was also historically related to the musical culture of Central Asia. It is the author's understanding that the grand theme of the current UNESCO-sponsored international seminar on "Korean Culture and the Silk Road" is designed to explore, academically, various fields of Korean culture each from its own angle.

The terms "influence" and "acceptance" are two academic terms of importance, invariably employed in any discussion of the mutual relationship in cultural exchange with neighboring countries. Since the two terms have to be clearly defined and differentiated depending on how the relation with foreign culture is viewed. We will use the term "influence" to describe the consequences exerted on culture of one nation by that of another, and we will employ "acceptance" to describe the reception of one culture by that of another.

Influence and the acceptance of foreign culture take place repeatedly in history. A particular cultural aspect of a nation may dominate another, or a culture of one nation may accept that of another of its own volition, while two cultures may interact with each other on equal terms.

The issues of influence from and acceptance of foreign culture are so complex and variegated that it is quite difficult to grasp the substance of the issue. However, the author will attempt to explore how music from Central Asia was accepted in the ancient history of Korean music, dating from the Three Kingdoms period through the Unified Silla period. We will cover four subjects in terms of acceptance of music from Central Asia: Buddhist chant (Pomp'ae 梵唄) of Unified Silla; Ch'oe Ch'i-won's 崔致遠 Hyangak chabyong osu 鄉樂雜詠五首 or "Five reciting poems of hyangak"; transverse flute (hoengjok 橫笛) and five-stringed lute (ohyon pip'a 五絃琵琶) of Koguryo; and modal terms (wolcho 越調 pansopcho 般涉調 hwangjogjo 黃鐘調) of T'ang music in the three bamboo instruments (samjuk) of Silla. On the basis of researches being already in existence, a general observation will be made in the following three sections.

## 2. Pomp'ae of Unified Silla and Ch'oe Ch'i-won's Hyangak chapyong osu

Buddhist chant (pomp'ae 梵唄) is an important musical genre which branched out in close relation with Buddhist rites. Though it is said that the root of pomp'ae may be traced back to Brahmanism based upon Indian Vedic thought, the ancient pomp'ae of Korea is known to have derived directly from the Chinese fan-pai 梵唄 initiated by Tsao Chih 曹植 (Cho Sik in Sino-Korean: 192-232) of the Wei 魏 Dynasty in around the 3rd century<sup>1</sup>. If Chinese fan-pai is rooted in the Buddhism of India, then it may be reasonable to assert that Korean pomp'ae might have been historically related to the musical culture of Central Asia.

Buddhism was introduced to Koguryo in 372 (2nd year in the reign of King Sosurim 小獸林王) and then to Paekche in 384 (first year in the reign of King Ch'imryu 沈留王), and to Silla in 535 (22nd year in the reign of King Pophung 法興王). Thus, pomp'ae seems to have been introduced to the Three Kingdoms along with the introduction of Buddhism, because religious rituals must have been indispensable in the introduction of Buddhism along with the three Buddhist treasures (priest, scripture, and statues). There is, however, no bibliographical data extant today to prove this except for two historical materials containing the record on Silla pomp'ae during the South-North Dynasties period: the monument inscription for Zen monk Chin'gam; and Ennin's 圓仁 (793-864): Won In in Sino-Korean) Diary of Pilgrimage to T'ang in Search for the Law (Nitto guho junrei qyoki 入唐求法巡禮行記). Pomp'ae, as practiced in Unified Silla, may be summarised as follows, based upon existing research results<sup>2</sup> made so far in the field of Korean musicology.

Zen monk Chin'gam 眞鑑禪師, a high Silla monk, Hyeso 惠昭 (774-850) went to T'ang in 804 (15<sup>th</sup> year in the reign of King Aejang 哀莊王), returned home in 830 (5<sup>th</sup> year in the reign of King Hyungdok 興德王), and taught pomp'ae at a famous Buddhist temple now known as Ssanggyesa 雙溪寺. He introduced pomp'ae of T'ang style to Silla society in the early 9<sup>th</sup> century. Around the same time, a Japanese high monk, Ennin 圓仁 (793-864), toured T'ang from 838 and 847, and recorded in his travelogues that three styles of pomp'ae were practiced at a Silla temple (Choksanwon 赤山院) located in the Shantung 山東 peninsula of China. They were the first Silla style 新羅風 in practice in Silla society, the second T'ang style 唐風 then popular in T'ang society, and the third Japanese style 日本風 then in practice in Japanese society.

Since Zen monk Chin'gam taught pomp'ae that he learned in T'ang, China, it must have been the T'ang style's fan-pai of the early 9<sup>th</sup> century as referred to in Ennin's travelogue, and it may be safe for us to assume that pomp'ae either of the Silla or Japanese style must have been played respectively in Silla or Japanese society which was before the 9<sup>th</sup> century. One may also assume that the T'ang style fan-pai 梵唄 introduced to Silla society in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, must have been what Silla accepted and developed into a more enriched Silla form.

The five poems of hyangak (Hyangak chabyong osu 鄉樂雜詠五首) in Chinese characters by Ch'oe Ch'i-won 崔致遠 (born in 857) is an important document which depicts an aspect of performing arts in Silla society toward the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century. The five mask plays, Kumhwan 金丸, Wolchon 月顛, Taemyon 大面, Soktok 束毒 and Sanye 仙翫, are said to be characteristic of Silla music hyangak 鄉樂, but in the field of Korean studies, they were proved to have in fact derived from the performing acts of Central Asia.

Kumhwan 金丸 was assumed to have been related to a play called lung-wan-hsi 丸 a kind of ball playing game of Central Asia, while Wolchon 月顛 was thought to have been a sort of masked dance play handed down in the Ho-t'ien region of Yu-t'ien, now Khotan of Central Asia<sup>3</sup>. Taemyon 大面 was explained to have been related to Ta-mien-hsi 大面 (lit. "big mask play") of T'ang deriving from the barbarian dance of Kuei-tsu 龜茲, a kind of shamanistic dance play deriving from Soghd, now the Tashkent and Samarkand regions of Central Asia. Sanye is assumed to have derived from a lion's mask play belonging to the Kuei-tsu tradition of Central Asia, that is believed to have been related with the Chinese Hsi-liang-chi 西涼伎.

In the light of the fact that Ch'oe Ch'i-won went to T'ang in 869 (9<sup>th</sup> year in the reign of King Kyongum 景文王 ) at the age of 12, passed the state civil examination, served in a government post, and then returned home in 885 ( 5<sup>th</sup> year in the reign of King Hon'gang 憲康王 ), the five poems of hyangak may have to be seen as part of performing arts widely popular both in T'ang and Silla societies in the latter half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century. An example of a masked dance play incorporated into the hyangak 鄉樂 category may be found in the court dance performance of the hyangak 鄉樂 and the tangka 唐樂 in Koryosa 高麗史 or History of Koryo.<sup>4</sup> One may construe that Ch'oe Ch'i-won labelled the five performing arts of Central Asia as hyangak (native music), because the masked dance plays had already been accepted into Silla society toward the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century.

### 3. The Transverse Flute and the Five-Stringed Lute of Koguryo

Koguryo 高句麗, neighbouring the Asian continent proper, was the first nation among the Three Kingdoms, in realizing the blooming of Korea's ethnic music culture in its continual cultural exchange with the continent, and thus, exhibiting its prestige abroad. A number of research articles on the music history of Koguryo and Central Asia has already been published in the field of Korean historico-musicology.

The music culture of Koguryo has been recorded as Koryoak 高麗樂 (Kaoli-yueh in Chinese) or Koryogi 高麗伎 (Kao-li-chi) in the authentic histories of China, and as Komagaku 高麗樂 in Japanese historical documents. Though the music culture of Koguryo in the Three Kingdoms period has been proved in various ways by historical materials on music, its relation with Central Asia will be surveyed centering around two musical instruments in use of the time, i.e. the transverse flute (hoengjok 橫笛) and the five-stringed lute (oh yon pip'a 五絃琵琶), since the instruments had a close relationship with the hyangak instruments of Unified Silla (668-935).

The Koguryo flute, played in a horizontal position like the present bamboo flute, was recorded in three ways in the Chinese authentic histories: hoengch'wi (heng-ch'ui in Chinese), cnok 笛 (ti), and hoenjok 橫笛 (heng-ti); and yokobue 橫笛 in the Japanese historical documents.<sup>5</sup> According to these literary documents, the transverse flute is assumed to have been played in Koguryo society in the 6th century at the latest. The archaeological source to

the point is mural painting of Tomb No.17 at Chiban 輯安 (Chi-an), Manchuria, which is assumed to have been built in the 6th or 7th century<sup>6</sup>. A mural painting of a music performance in Tomb No.1 at Changch'on 長川 (Ch'ang-ch'uan), Manchuria, allow us to assume that the transverse flute might have been accepted in Koguryo around the 5th century. The historical origin of the Koguryo flute may be summarized from literary sources as follows.

In light of the fact<sup>7</sup> that the transverse flute was played not only in Koryogi (Kao-li-chi), but in Kanggukki 康國伎 (K'ang-kuo-chi), An'gukki 安國伎 (An-kuo-chi), Sorukki 疎伎 (Shu-ch'ih-chi), and Kujagi 龜茲伎 (Kuei-tzu-chi) from among seven performing groups called Ch'ilbugi 七部伎 (Ch'i-pu-chi) in the period of K'ai-huang 開皇 (581-600), and nine performing ground, Kubugi 九部伎 (Chiu-pu-chi) in the period of Ta-yeh 大業 (605-616), both of Sui 隋, China, the origin of the Koguryo flute may have to be sought in Central Asia as in the case of the Chinese transverse flute, because such regions as Shu-ch'ih 疎 (now Kashgar), K'ang-Kuo 康國 (Samar kant), An-kuo 安國 (Bukhara), and Kuei-tzu 龜茲 (Kucha) had been historically related to the Caravan Route between China and Central Asia, in other words, the very Silk Road.

The five-stringed lute of Koguryo, related to musical instruments of Central Asia, was recorded as ohyon (wu-hsien) or ohyon pip'a 五絃琵琶 (wu-hsien p'i-p'a) in the Chinese authentic histories, but recorded as hyang-pip'a 鄉琵琶 (lit. "native lute") in the Samguk sagi 三國史記<sup>8</sup> or History of the Three Kingdoms. Ohyon pip'a was named because the lute had five strings. Since the lute had a straight neck, however, it was also called chikkyong pip'a 直頸琵琶 (lute with straight neck). The five-stringed lute with a straight neck (ohyon pip'a) differs structurally from sahyon pip'a 四絃琵琶, i.e. four-stringed lute which were also known as kokkyong pip'a 曲頸琵琶 (lit., "lute with a curved neck") or tang pip'a 唐琵琶 ("Chinese lute").

According to the seven or nine performing groups (Ch'i-pu-chi 七部伎 or Chiu-pu-chi 九部伎) and the ten performing groups (Shih-pu-chi 十部伎) of T'ang China,<sup>9</sup> the five-stringed lute was also played in Koryogi 高麗伎 (Kao-li-chi), and such in performing groups as An-kuo-chi 安國伎 (Bukhara), Shu-ch'ih-chi 疎伎 (Kashgar), His-liang-chi 西涼伎 (region on the upstreams of the Yellow River), (Kucha' center of the northern route along the

Tianshan Mountains), and Tien-chu-chi 天竺伎 (India). Thus the root of the five stringed lute may have to be sought in Central Asia. Chinese historical documents and archaeological evidence tell us that the five-stringed lute of Koguryo was played in around the 6th century. The mural painting of Tomb No.1 at Ch'ang-ch'uan 長川, Manchuria, however, made it possible to assume that the five-stringed lute was played in Koguryo society around the 5th century.<sup>10</sup>

In the view of the fact that the transverse flute and the five-stringed lute were used for the music of Kuei-tzu-chi 龜茲伎 and Hsi-lianq-chi 西涼伎, which were made available following the conquest of Central Asia by Lu Kuang 呂光 in 382 (18th year of Chien-yuan 建元), the two instruments must have been introduced to China toward the latter half of the 4th century. It may be safe for us to assume that the two instruments might have been available in Koguryo in the 5th century. In addition to the mural painting of Tomb No.1 at Ch'ang-ch'uan, proof for an assumption that the transverse flute and the five-stringed lute must have been accepted in Koguryo society comes from the fact that Koguryo started active cultural exchange with the Earlier Ch'in 前秦 State from around the end of the 4th century. Buddhism was introduced to Koguryo in 372 by the monk Sundo 順道 (Shun Tao) of the Earlier Ch'in state.

#### 4. Wolcho, Pansopcho, and Hwangjongjo in the Three Bamboo Flutes (Samhyon) of Silla

The music culture of Unified Silla 新羅 (668-935) in the North-South Dynasties period may be characterized from two perspectives. Internally, the music culture of Unified Silla accepted the music culture of Paekche 百濟 and Koguryo 高句麗, and developed them anew. Externally, Unified Silla accepted the mature music of T'ang 唐, China, developing the music culture of Silla to a new dimension. Achieving the unification of the Three Kingdoms, Silla accepted the transverse flute called chok 笛 of Paekche and the flute called hoengjok 橫笛 in Koguryo, developing the flutes into the three bamboo flutes (samjuk 三竹) of Silla hyangak, while twelve-stringed zither (kayagum 伽耶琴) of Kaya 伽耶 State, six-stringed zither (komun'go 瑟) and five stringed lute of Koguryo Kingdom were also accepted as the three string instruments (samhyon 三絃) of Silla hyangak.<sup>11</sup> By the fact that the three string instruments and the three bamboo flutes were regarded as the representative instruments of Unified Silla hyangak in the North-South Dynasties period, the music culture

of Unified Silla was able to pursue further development in terms of native Korean music known as hyangak.

Cultural exchange with T'ang was quite active in the North-South Dynasties period, and musical exchange between unified Silla and T'ang was no exception. Buddhist chant (Pomp'ae 梵唄) of Zen monk Chin' gam and the T'ang style 唐風 pomp'ae as referred to by the Japanese monk Ennin may be cited as examples of musical exchange at the time. Another example is the musical -features of the three modal systems of T'ang music, hwangjongjo 黃鍾調 (huang-chung-t'iao), pansopcho 般涉調 (pan-she-t'iao), and wolcho 越調 (yueh-t'iao), as referred to in the Samguk sagi 三國史記 may be summarized as follows.<sup>12</sup>

The three modal systems of T'ang music, huang-chung-t'iao, pan-she-t'iao, and yueh-t'iao were derived from the 28 modal terms used in the secular music (su-yueh 俗樂) of T'ang. Musical features of the three modal systems follow.

Pan sopcho 般涉調 (pan-she-t'iao) is also known as t'aejogyunjiujo 太簇均之羽調 or t'aejuu 太簇羽, another modal term used in the form of Chinese ya-yueh 雅樂, which means u mode (mode (yu-t'iao 羽調) in t'aeju 太鍾 (t'ai-ts'u) key. The modal term wolcho 越調 (yueh-t'iao) is identical with hwangjonggyujisangjo 黃鍾均之羽調 or hwangjongshang 黃鍾商 in the Chinese ya-yueh form, i.e. sang mode (shang-t'iao 商調) in hwangjong 黃鍾 (huang-chung) key. Hwangjongjo 黃鍾調 (Huang-chung-t'iao), also called hwangjonggyunjiujo 黃鍾均之羽調 or hwangjongu in the Chinese form turned out to be u mode (yu-t'iao 羽調) in hwangjong 黃鍾 key. Such modal terms in the fashion of Chinese ya-yueh as t'aejuu 太簇羽 (pansopcho 般涉調), hwangjongsang 黃鍾商 (wolcho 越調), and hwangjongu 黃鍾羽 (hwangjongjo 黃鍾調) are to be interpreted not in terms of wijosik 爲調式 (wei-t'iao-shih) but of chijosik 之調式 (chih-t'iao-shih)<sup>13</sup>.

Pansopcho 般涉調 (pan-she-t'iao) turned out to be related to bandam 般膽 (pan-tan) from among seven modal systems of So Chi-p'a 蘇祇婆 (Sui Chic-p'o), and the Chinese term pan-tan (bandam in Sino-Korean) was a Chinese transliteration of its original Sanskrit word, pancama. Wolcho 越調 (yueh-t'iao), otherwise also called irwolcho 一越調 (i-yueh-t'iao) derived from the iwolcho 伊越調 (i-yueh-t'iao) used in ancient music of P'iao-kuo 髀國, now

Burma, under the influence of Indian music at that time. In light of the fact that the 28 modal systems of T'ang secular music, including these three modes of T'ang music, changed their names and were known published from a stele made in 754 (13<sup>th</sup> year of T'ien-pao 天寶), it may be pointed out that the modal systems of T'ang music for the three bamboo flutes might have been accepted in the latter period of Unified Silla (下代 780-935).

In sum, in view of the fact that the three modal systems of T'ang music for the three bamboo flutes turned out to have been a part of the 29 modal systems of T'ang secular music (su-yueh 俗樂) which had been accepted in Silla society following the 8th century, it seems to be safe for us to assume that, from the standpoint of an overall context of Asian music history, a part of Central Asian music was made fixed in T'ang in around the 8th century, and was reaccepted as music culture for the three bamboo flutes in the latter period of Silla (780-935). In other words, the three modal systems of T'ang music for the three bamboo flutes constitute a clear proof that Silla society accepted T'ang music as something new in its music culture. One may assume that the three modal systems were an outcome of cultural exchange undertaken through the Silk Road between T'ang and Central Asia, and that outcome was re-accepted by Silla society in around the 9th century.

##### 5. Concluding Remarks: Ancient History of Korean Music and the Silk Road

In the historical development of Korean music, the Three Kingdoms and the Unified Silla periods were ages when the active acceptance of foreign music was pursued most vigorously. The transverse flute (hoengjok 黃笛) and the five-stringed lute (ohyon pip'a 五絃琴) of Koguryo played an important role in driving the music culture in the Three Kingdoms period into a new direction. The Silla pomp'ae, five poems of hyangak, and the three modal systems of T'ang music were actual examples of the acceptance of foreign culture and the development of them into outstanding performing arts of Unified Silla.

Although a part of music culture achieved in Koguryo and Silla societies was accepted from neighboring China, we have seen that the transverse flute and the five-stringed lute of Koguryo, pomo'ae 梵唄, masked dance plays, and modal systems of T'ang music in Silla were closely related to the music culture of Central Asia which China had accepted via the Silk Road. One can observe that ancient Korea accepted foreign music and remodeled it as her own rather than having been predominantly influenced one-sidedly by foreign culture.



In the case of Koguryo, if they should have failed in accepting such foreign musical instruments from Central Asia as the transverse flute or the five-stringed lute, and failed in making them as their own instruments, they would not be able to export its music, Koryoak 高麗樂 (Komagaku), to the ancient Japanese court including the transverse flute during the Three Kingdoms period.<sup>14</sup> That Silla and Paekche as well as Koguryo influenced the ancient music of Japan is well known in the field of Korean and Japanese historico-musicology. This is why more weight should be given to the term "acceptance" than "influence" in an account of the ancient history of Korean music and its relationship with foreign music.

While a part of Central Asian performing arts, accepted in China via the Silk Road, was accepted by Korean people, a determining momentum was made in creating a small flow of streams in a big flux in the ancient history of Korean music. The independent-minded Korean people have been exhibited to the full in the whole gamut of culture in general, including that of music, throughout the Three Kingdoms and North-South Dynasties periods. In a general survey of ancient Korean music, the important role played by Korean musicians in influencing the formation of ancient Japanese court music has to be cited as an effect of the independent-minded capacity of Korean people in accepting foreign culture. This can be substantiated in the Komagaku 高麗樂 tradition in the present-day Japanese court music known as Gagaku 雅樂 .

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Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Kim Tong-uk 金東旭 Han'guk kayo ui yon'gu 韓國歌謠의 研究 (Seoul: Uryu munhwasa, 1961), p. 10.
- <sup>2</sup> Lee Hye-ku (Yi Hye-gu 李惠求), Han'guk umak yon'gu 韓國音樂研究 (Seoul: Kungim umak yon'guhoe, 1957), pp. 252-91; Lee Byong-Won (Yi Pyong-won 李秉元), (Song Pang-song 宋芳松), Han'guk umak t'ongsa 韓國音樂通史 (Seoul: Ilchogak, 1984), pp. 126-30.
- <sup>3</sup> Lee Du-hyun (Yi Tu-hyon 李杜鉉), Han'guk ui kamyon'guk (韓國의 假面劇) Seoul : Ilchisa, 1979), pp. 58-66.
- <sup>4</sup> Koryosa 高麗史 chuan 71. 1b1-4b7 (Honsondo 獻仙桃), 4b8-6a9, (Suyonjang 壽延長), 6b1-8b8 (Oyangson 五羊仙), 8b9-12a2 (P'ogurak 拋球樂), 12a3-13a8 (Yonhwadae); Koryosa 蓮花壽, chuan 71.31a3-31b6, Mugo 舞鼓, 31b7-32a8 (Tongdong 動動), 32a9-33a1 (Muae 舞磬), in which the court dance of Chinese origin (Tangak chongjae 唐樂呈才) and the court dance of Korean origin (Hyangak chongjae 鄕樂呈才) entered under the listings of Tangak 唐樂 and Sogak 俗樂.
- <sup>5</sup> Sui-shu, 隋書 chuan 81.2a10-2b1; Pe-shih, 北史 chuan 34.1115-16 Komagagi 高麗支 chuan 30.909 (Komagaki 高麗樂器); chuan 30.908 (Yokobueshi 橫笛師 and Yokobuesei 橫笛生).
- <sup>6</sup> Lee Hye-ku, Han'guk umak yon'gu, pp. 200-209.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp. 195-96; Kishibe Shigeo (岸邊成雄), Kodai siruku rodo no ongaku 古代シルクロードの音楽 (Tokyo: Katansha, 1982), p. 105.
- <sup>8</sup> Song Bang-song, Han'guk kodaie umaksa yon'gu 韓國古代音樂史研究 (Seoul : Ilchisa, 1985), pp. 101-106. For the original text of hyang pip'a, see Samguksagi, chuan 32.9a5-6.
- <sup>9</sup> See footnote 7 of this paper.
- <sup>10</sup> Song Bang-song, Han'guk kodaie umaksa yon'gu, pp. 22-36.
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp. 77-109; and Koryo umaksa yon'gu 高麗音樂史研究 (Seoul: Inchisa, 1988), pp. 137-67.
- <sup>12</sup> Song bango-song, « Silla samjuk ui tangakcho yon'gu », 新羅三竹의 唐樂調 研究 Han'guk hakpo 韓國學報 (Seoul: Ilchisa, 1989), Vol. 56, pp. 2-53.
- <sup>13</sup> Kishibe Shigeo, Kodai siruku rodo no ongaku, pp. 164-202; Song Bang-song (trans.), "Tangsogak isipp' alcho wa kuja soyok ch'ilcho" 唐俗樂 28調와 龜絃西域 7조 Han'guk umak sahakpo 韓國音樂史學報 (Kyongsan: Han'guk umak sahakoe, 1989), Vol. 2, pp. 125-53.

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<sup>14</sup>Song Bang-song, “Han’ guk kodai umak ui ilbon chonp’a”, 韓國古代 音樂 與 日本 傳播 Han’guk umak sahakpo, Vol. 1, pp. 7-40; or Kuksagwan nonch’ong 國史館論叢 (Kwach’on: Kuksa p’yonch’an wiwonhoe, 1989), Vol. 1, pp. 27-53.