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THE KOREAN COURTYARD ENSEMBLE FOR RITUAL MUSIC (Aak)*

by Robert C. Provine

Introduction

Twice a year, in the spring and autumn, a Sacrifice to Confucius called *Sôkchôn* is carried out in a small shrine compound (*Munmyo*) in the northeast part of Seoul, Korea. The ritual music, *aak*, performed during the ceremony is stately and imposing, perfectly suited to its purpose. Many Korean scholars and musicians consider it to be ancient and authentically Chinese, and even a cursory comparison with other musical genres found in Korea shows this ritual music to be strikingly unique in performing style.

Proud of having retained this Chinese rite and music for many centuries, the Koreans have wished to return it to its native land (though initial arrangements for performances during the Beijing Asiad in the autumn of 1990 had to be abandoned). As the popular press has described the Korean perception of the ceremony, "The most important Confucian rite, *Sôkchôn* was imported from Tang dynasty China in A.D. 648 . . . Since then, it has been preserved almost intact in Korea while losing much of its original form in China and other Asian countries." It is "the most authentic Confucian rite in the world." (*Newsreview* 1991: 28-29).

It is not the intention of this article to redefine adjectives such as "authentic", "traditional", and "ancient", but rather to outline some of the facts of the history of this music, leaving to the reader the task of deciding which catchwords of musicology or ethnomusicology to apply. In a number of publications, I have already described the general structure and history of sacrificial rites and music in Korea, as well as the sources for their study (1975, 1988, 1989).

Aak, unlike Chinese *yayue* and Japanese *gagaku* (both written with the same Chinese characters), is not a collective term for a number of court music genres, though some Koreans have loosely used the word in that sense in the present century. Rather, the term *aak* identifies a specific genre of Korean ritual music which is now performed in context only in the Sacrifice to Confucius, though in earlier centuries it was also played in a further five state sacrificial rites.

Aak was and is performed by two musical ensembles in alternation: a Terrace Ensemble (*tûngga*) positioned on the stone porch of a shrine building, and a Courtyard Ensemble (*hôn'ga*) at the far end of the courtyard fronting the shrine building. State sacrificial rites in traditional Korea consisted of a number of prescribed sections of ritual actions, most of which were accompanied by music: the Terrace Ensemble performed music in keys corresponding to *yin* in the ancient Confucian dualism, alternating sections with the Courtyard Ensemble, which performed in *yang* keys. Both ensembles accompanied a group of forty-eight dancers.

*Read at the 31st World Conference of ICTM in Hong Kong, July 1991.

The Terrace Ensemble was the subject of an earlier paper (Provine 1986), and this article chiefly concerns the Courtyard Ensemble.

Confucianism came to Korea as early as the fourth century A.D. (Lee 1984: 57-59), that is, at about the same time as "states" in the modern sense were formed on the peninsula (Barnes 1990: 113-162). Surviving sources, however, tell us little about any music that might have been associated with state sacrificial rites until the Koryô dynasty (918-1392). The history of the Courtyard Ensemble from Koryô to the present divides itself into three stages of development, corresponding roughly to 1) the Koryô dynasty, 2) its successor the Chosôn dynasty (1392-1910), and 3) the modern period since the demise of royal Korea.

First Stage: Koryô

In 1114 and 1116, emperor Huizong of the Chinese Northern Song dynasty (reigned 1100-1125) gave the Koryô king Yejong two enormous gifts of musical instruments, the first for banquet music, the second for *yayue* (*aak*) to be performed in sacrificial rites and a few other court ceremonies.¹ The *yayue* instruments, for both Terrace and Courtyard Ensembles, numbered nearly 600 and included many large, heavy, and finely decorated sets of tuned bronze bells and stone chimes.

The Courtyard Ensemble sent to Korea was nevertheless a much smaller one than that prescribed for use by the emperor himself in China. The layout of the original Chinese one, as shown in Figures 1a and b, has been reconstructed from historical documents by Yang Yinliu (1981: 398-399). Several points should be noted: the ensemble is framed on all four sides by sets of tuned bells and chimes, plus a number of single tuned bells and chimes; inside this outer frame are columns of singers, string instruments, mouth organs, and flutes, plus assorted percussion instruments; there are five kinds of the long zither *qin*, with one, three, five, seven, and nine strings; there are thirty-two singers; and there are irregular numbers of instruments in the enclosed area.² The composition of this ensemble is attested consistently in a number of sources.³ There were ways in which this extravagant ensemble requiring about 400 performers could be modified: for example, a smaller group was used when a minister stood in as proxy for the emperor, and different drums were used for sacrifices according to the different types of spirits (classified as heavenly, earthly, or human).

Readers familiar with Chinese music history will already realize that this ensemble belonged to a rather peculiar musical time, namely that under the influence of the short-lived Dasheng Institute (*Dashengfu*, 1105-1125) (Pian 1967: 5-7 and Ling 1940). The directors of the Institute were responsible for some unusual notions: it was proposed, for example, to base the measurement of a pitch pipe for a fundamental pitch on one of the emperor's fingers. Also, the one-, three-, five-, seven-, and nine-string *qin* are not otherwise found uniformly grouped like this in Chinese music history, and only the seven-string instrument was a standard model both before and after the Institute's time. The Dasheng Institute was abolished in 1125, along with the fall of emperor Huizong, and the Northern Song itself fell to invaders in 1127. In Korea, however, the Dasheng instruments and music from 1116 remained in use, and this exceptional period of

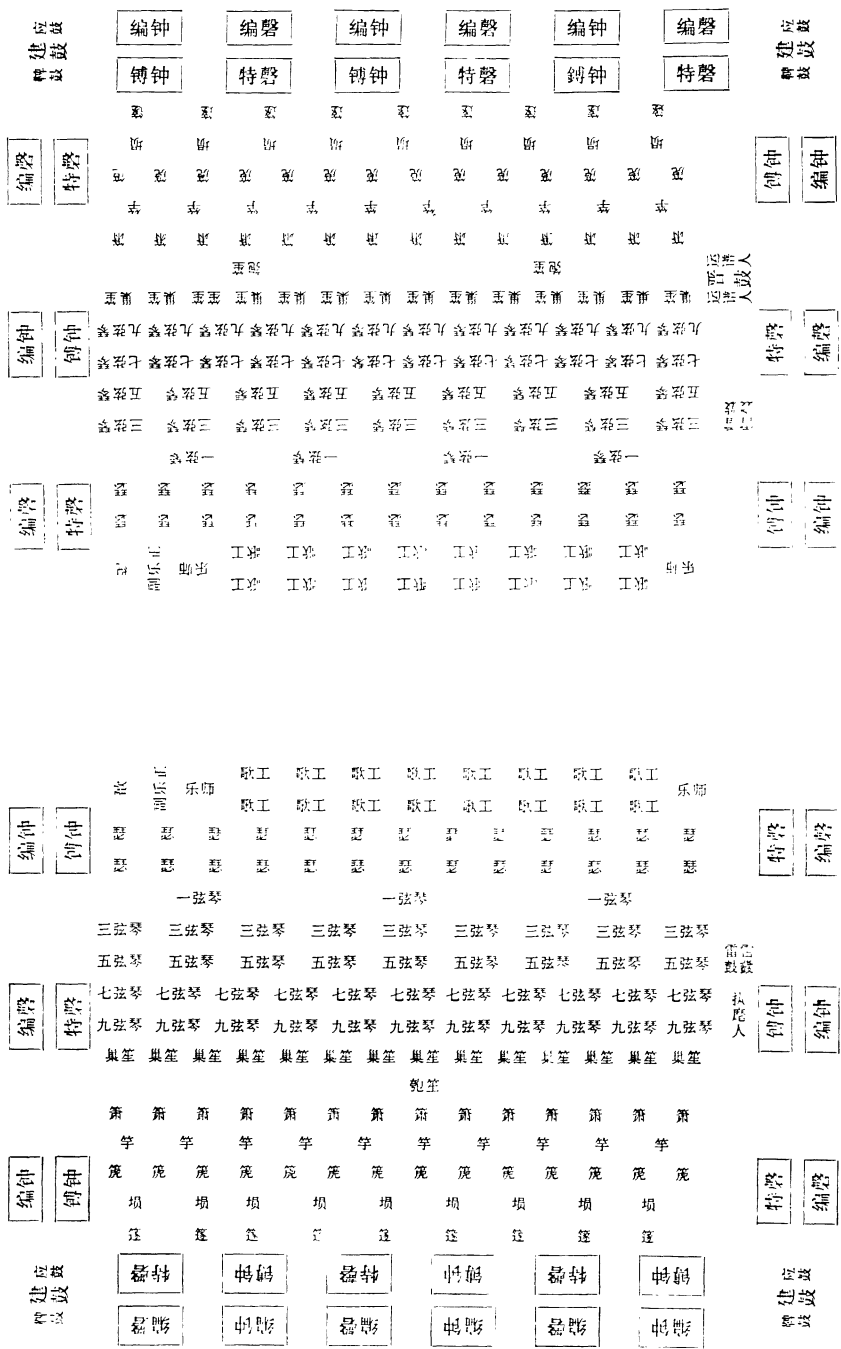


Figure 1a:
Chinese Courtyard Ensemble ca. 1110

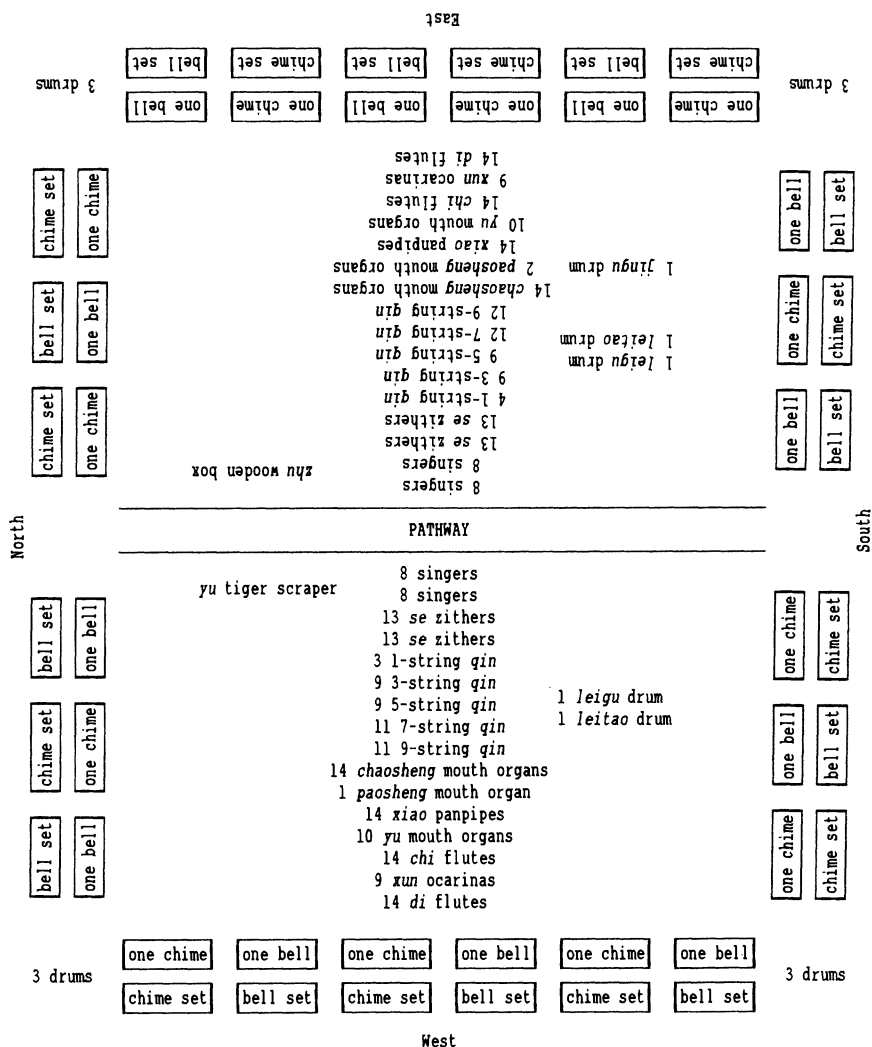


Figure 1b:
Chinese Courtyard Ensemble ca. 1110

Chinese music history is precisely the point of origin of the Korean *aak* tradition.

A few modifications of the Courtyard Ensemble were necessary for use in Korea: the chief one, deriving from an ancient prescription (*Zhouli* 23.5a), was that only an emperor was entitled to the four enclosing sides of bells and chimes (i.e. in the shape of a house); a “duke” of the empire, such as a provincial governor or the king of a neighboring country owing ritual allegiance to China, should have an ensemble of three sides (in the shape of a chariot). The ensemble as presented to Korea is described in detail in an official history of the Koryô dynasty, *Koryôsa*, published in 1451 (*Koryôsa* 70.2b-3b) (first page shown in Figure 2).

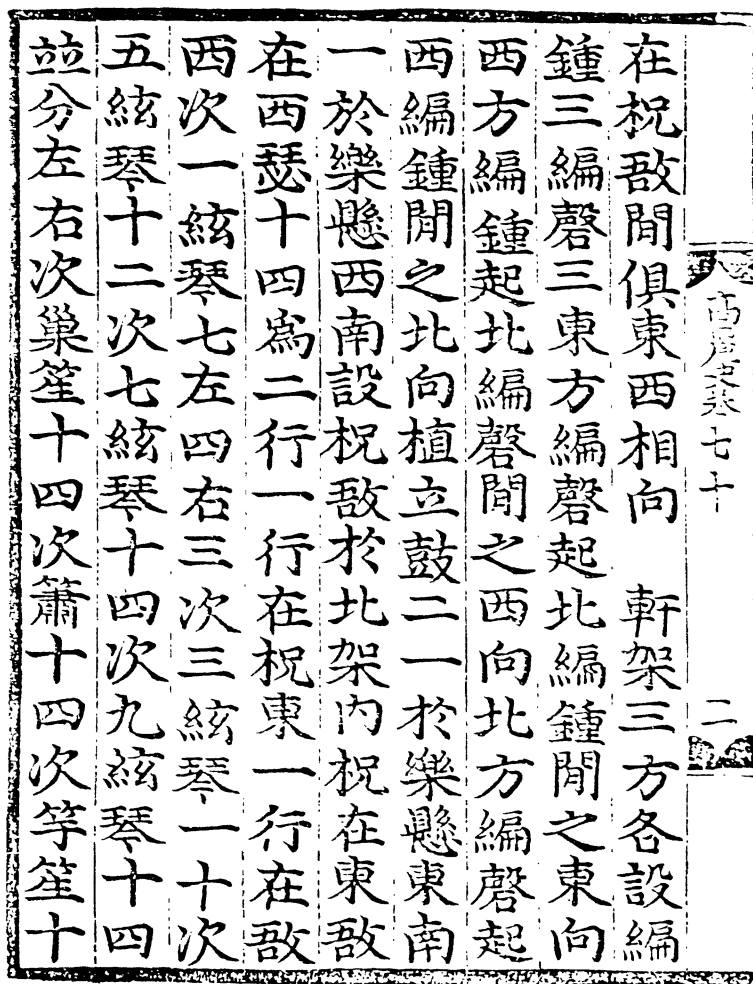


Figure 2:
Description of Courtyard Ensemble in *Koryôsa*

During the remaining 276 years of the Koryô dynasty, the ritual music was modified in various ways, including the mixing in of native Korean music with the original Chinese.⁶ The numerous gourd and wooden instruments would also have deteriorated over time and been difficult to replace locally. Worse, it is reported that when the Korean capital city Kaesông fell to the Red Turban invaders in 1361, all the musical instruments were destroyed except for some bells and chimes that an old musician threw into a pond (*Sejong sillok* 59.1a [1433/1]). Less than a decade later, emperor Taizu of the young Chinese Ming dynasty attempted to help out Koryô with a gift of fewer than ten new instruments, but these would have gone little way toward reconstituting the large ensemble of 1116. One can only conclude from the evidence that the performing tradition initiated in 1116 had already suffered breaks of continuity and performing style by the end of Koryô in 1392.

Second Stage: Chosôn

The next Korean ruling dynasty, Chosôn, also benefited from a gift, albeit a small one, of instruments from China: in 1406 the Yongle emperor sent fourteen instruments, including sets of bells and chimes. However, the most significant musical development in early Chosôn was a thorough reform and codification of ritual music between the 1420s and the end of the century. The chief guiding force for this reform was one of the great figures in Korean history, King Sejong (ruled 1418-1450). It was felt in early Chosôn that both the musical ensembles and music itself had fallen into ruin during Koryô, and that the Confucian duty of the new Chosôn rulers was to restore musical practices to a more correct and antique condition.

The reform of the Courtyard Ensemble was not simply based on a return to the Dasheng ensemble of 1116, but, significantly, on a book of the same Northern Song period which was firmly at odds with Dasheng thinking: Chen Yang's *Yueshu* (Treatise on Music) of 1103 (Pian 1967: 5-6). The first Korean attempt to sort out the Courtyard Ensemble was recorded in a source of 1415.⁷ Figure 4 (*Sejong sillok* 128.21a) reproduces a page from this Korean source, in which the descriptions of musical instruments display characteristic reliance on Chen Yang. The proposed physical layout of the ensemble shown in Figures 5a and b (*Sejong sillok* 128.24b) reveals a number of notable features, especially by comparison with Figure 1: there are no singers and no string instruments, and the horizontal rows of instruments in the middle uniformly consist of ten items.⁸ As expected, there are only three sides of bells and chimes enclosing the ensemble. This structure has clearly been derived directly from Chen Yang, as shown in Figures 6a (1103: 113.7b) and b (a partial English version), which show Chen's outline prescription for a three-sided layout (north here shown at the bottom), and Figure 7 (1103: 113.2b), which shows the emperor's ensemble with uniform numbers of instruments (twelve each) in horizontal internal rows. A subsequent Korean version of 1474 (Figure 8) is nearly identical to the 1415 one, differing only by a few alterations in the drums (*Kukcho orye sôrye* 1.94ab).⁹

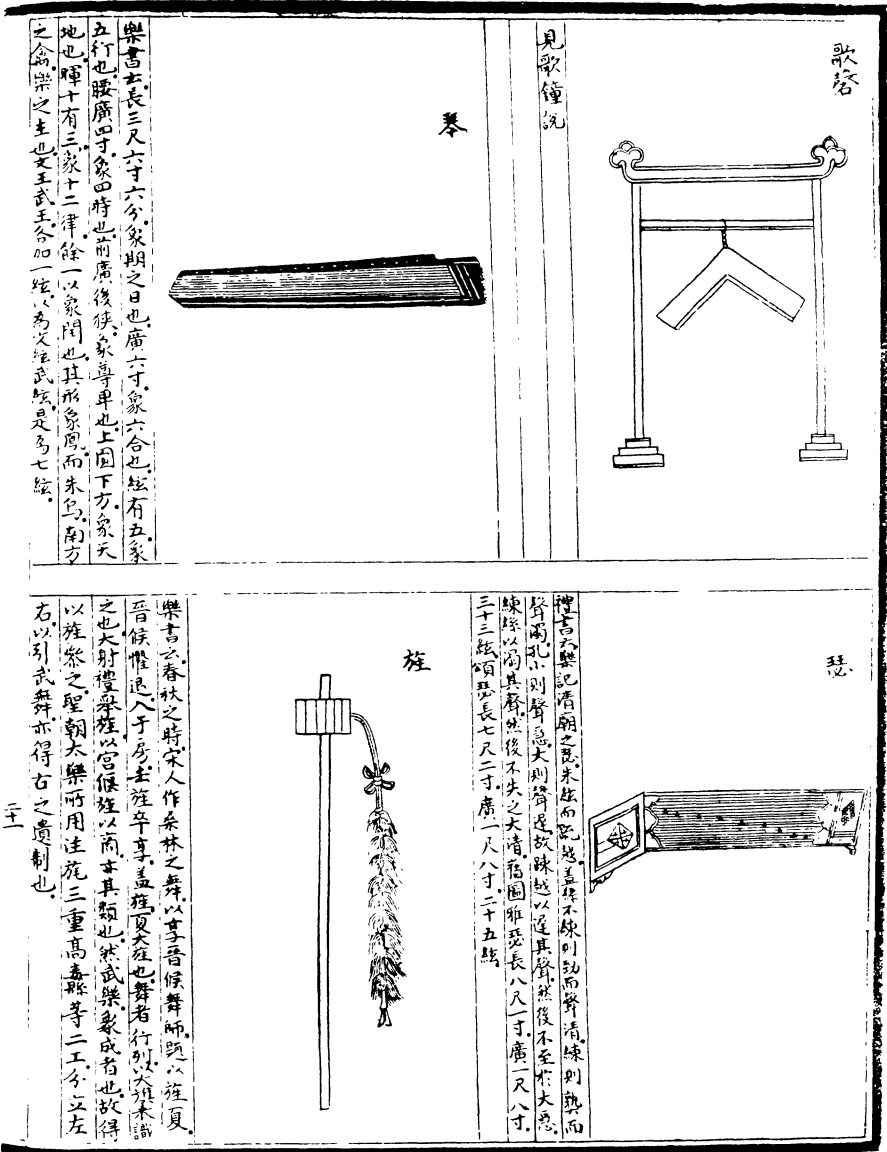


Figure 4:
Korean descriptions of instruments from 1415

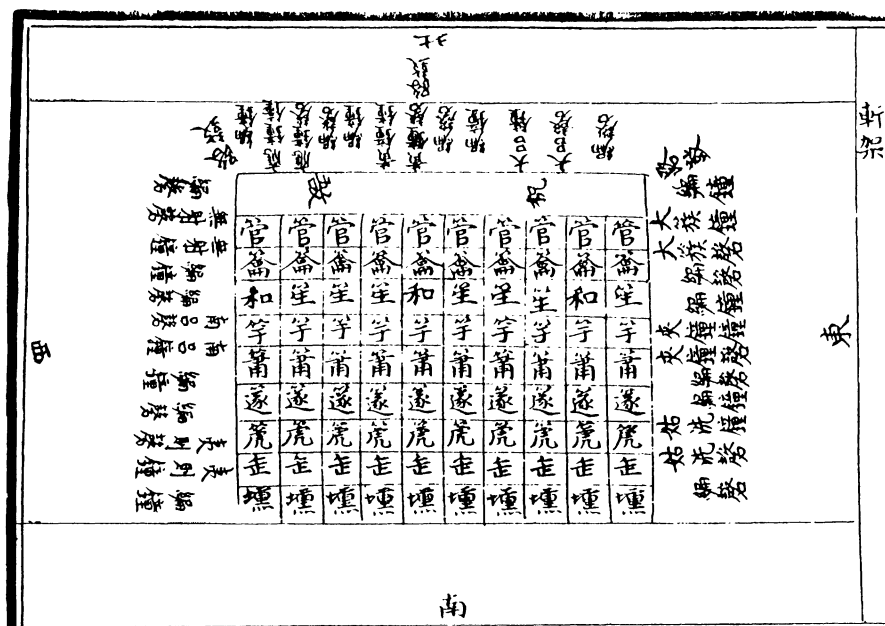


Figure 5a:
Korean Courtyard Ensemble of 1415

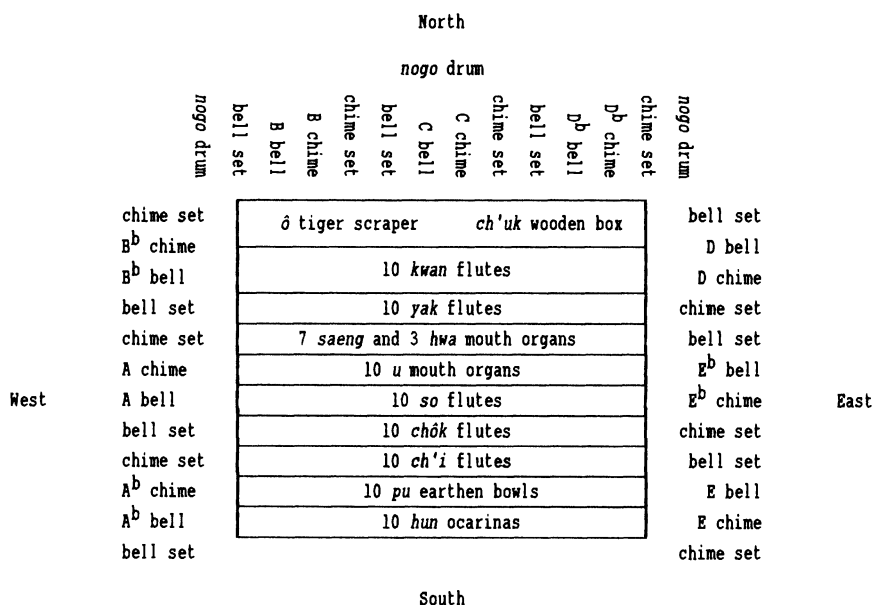


Figure 5b:
Korean Courtyard Ensemble of 1415

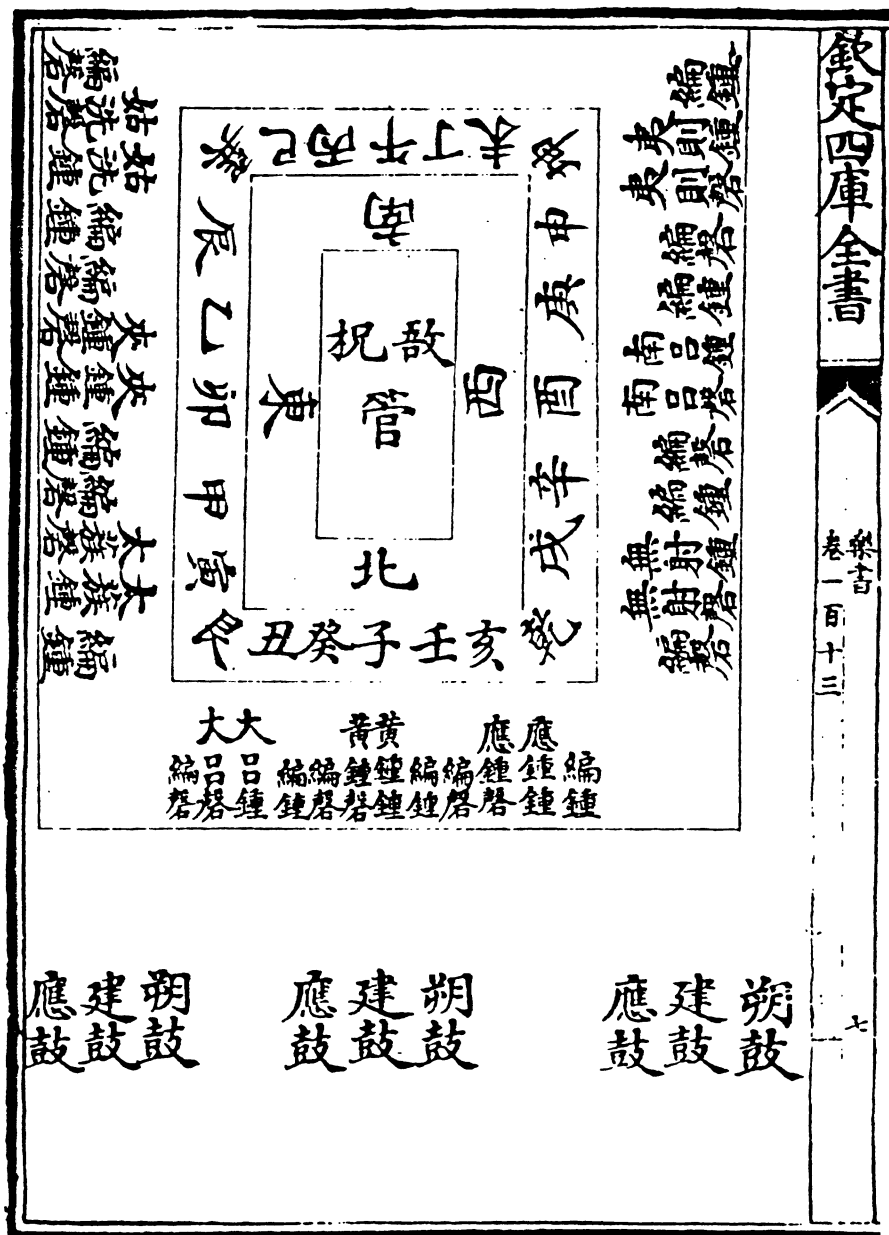


Figure 6a:
Chen Yang's three-sided Courtyard Ensemble

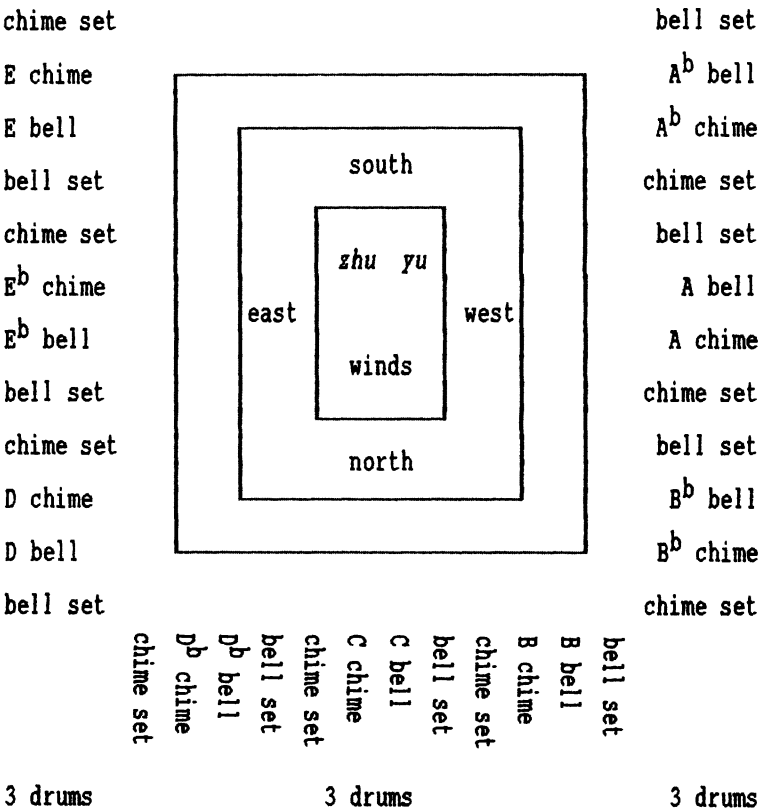


Figure 6b:
Chen Yang's three-sided Courtyard Ensemble

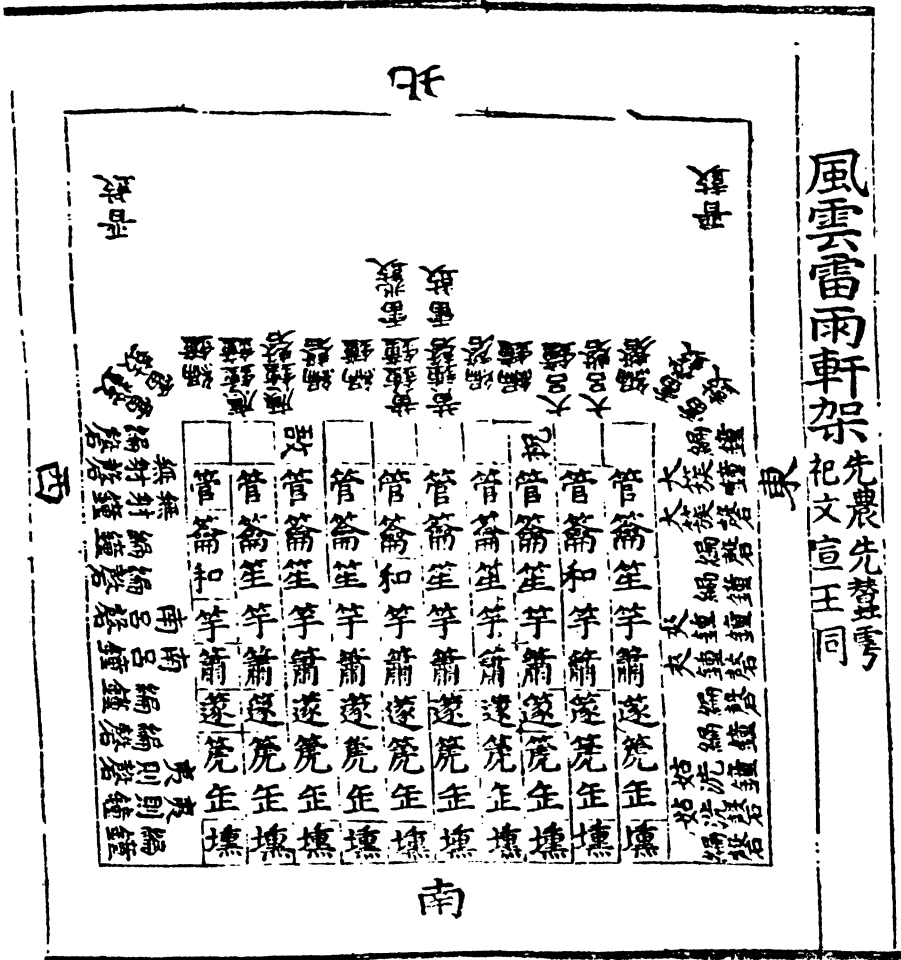


Figure 8:
Korean Courtyard Ensemble of 1474

The treatise *Akhak kwebôm* [Guide to the Study of Music] of 1493 is the culmination of fifteenth-century Korean musical research and sets the standard to which court musicians have referred ever since. Its Courtyard Ensemble, shown in Figure 9 (*Akhak kwebôm* 2.3a), requires 124 performers and is again similar to those of 1415 and 1474.¹⁰ All the Korean

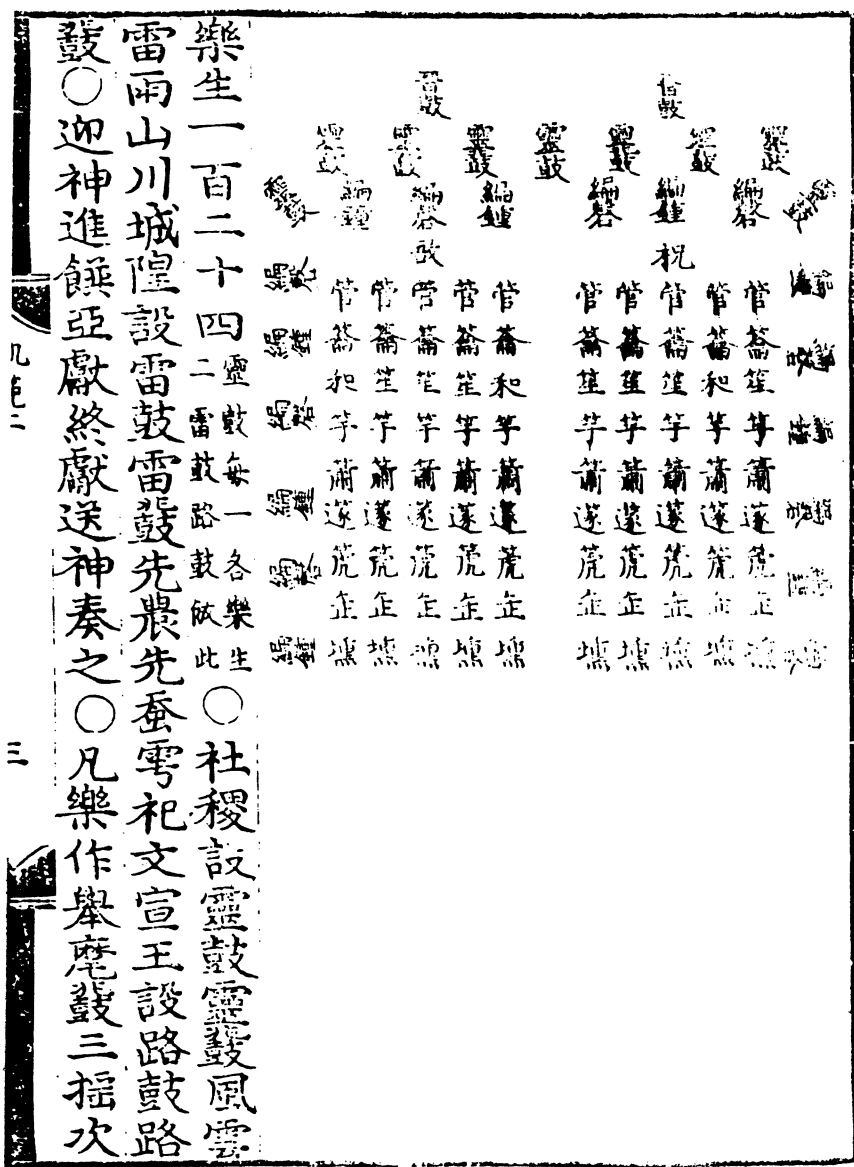


Figure 9: Korean Courtyard Ensemble of 1493

theoretical sources of the fifteenth century are emphatic that only the Terrace Ensemble contains singers and string instruments. The singers, stringed instruments, and overwhelming size of the Dasheng ensemble which had originally formed the basis of the Courtyard Ensemble in Koryŏ have been abandoned in favour of Chen Yang's smaller, more conservative, and historically mainstream ensemble.

Chen Yang provides no music notation, so the early Chosŏn Koreans had to turn elsewhere for melodies to perform on the reformed ensembles.

元朝林宇大成樂譜 至正條格所載無清聲又有以宮為變宮以變宮為宮虛											
迎神奏擬安之曲 九變											
黃鐘宮											
三戒											
大哉宣聖											
道尊德宗											
維持王化											
斯民是宗											
興祀有常											
精純並隆											
神其來格											
於昭盛容											
大呂為角											
生而知之											
有教無私											
成均之祀											
威儀孔時											
惟茲初丁											
潔我盛筵											
永言其道											
萬世之師											
太簇為徵											
其道如天											
清明之象											
應物而然											
二奏											
二奏											
世宗實錄卷第一百三十七											
二十五											

Figure 10a: Beginning of *Dasheng yuepu*



Descriptions of the ensemble from the later eighteenth century tend to be in two parts: how things ought to be (restatement of fifteenth-century prescriptions) and the sad state of how things actually are. Two examples will demonstrate the latter aspect: as shown in Figures 11a and b, the *T'aehakchi* [Records of the National Confucian Academy] of 1785 shows very few instruments, no three-sided enclosure of bells and chimes, no mouth organs, and no singers (*T'aehakchi* p. 163).¹³ The *Ch'un'gwan t'onggo* [Complete History of the Board of Rites] of 1789 has a similar content (Figures 12a and b),¹⁴ but the commentary indicates that in the Sacrifice to Confucius, both a singer and a song leader are to be included in the ensemble (*Ch'un'gwan t'onggo* 3.7b).

By the late seventeenth century, then, the Koreans had reintroduced into the Courtyard Ensemble a practice of singing which had not existed in it for at least four centuries. Some of the reasoning for this expansion of resources may have been economic: singers are much cheaper and easier to come by than sets of tuned bells and chimes. Singing in the Terrace Ensemble would have provided a model for the performance style.

Nineteenth-century Korea suffered economic stagnation and political collapse. From 1897 to 1910 there was a short period when the kingdom of Chosôn was nominally made an empire. During this time changes were made to the state sacrificial rites to symbolize Korea's ritual independence from China: for example, a Sacrifice to Heaven (normally to be carried out only by the "son of heaven", i.e. the Chinese emperor) was introduced, and the number of dancers was increased from forty-eight (the number for a "duke") to sixty-four (the number for a "ruler"), this being the number still used today. In theory, the Courtyard Ensemble should have had four enclosing sides of bells and chimes, and contained more internal instruments; in practice, this was economically impossible, and the ensemble remained at about its former size. Dancers, like singers, are cheaper than instruments.

The Third Stage: The Twentieth Century

Even before the final demise of royal and imperial Korea in 1910, most state sacrificial rites had been abolished under the influence of the Japanese, who were to colonize Korea for the first half of the century. Only the Sacrifices to Royal Ancestors (*Chongmyo*) and to Confucius were permitted to continue. The Sacrifice to Royal Ancestors, in fact, had not used *aak* (as defined at the beginning of this paper) since the fifteenth century.

There is not much data on the progress of the Courtyard Ensemble in the Sacrifice to Confucius in the early part of the century, though a travel diary by the Japanese musicologist Tanabe Hisao describes a performance in 1921 (Tanabe 1970: 98-107). Tanabe gives little detail of instruments, but he does give song texts for the Courtyard Ensemble sections of the ceremony, so the practice of singing may have still been intact at that point. Parenthetically, Tanabe was a great enthusiast for Korean court music, and he used his influence to improve the conditions of Korean musicians and elevate the prestige of their traditional music (Song Hyejin 1991: 142-143).

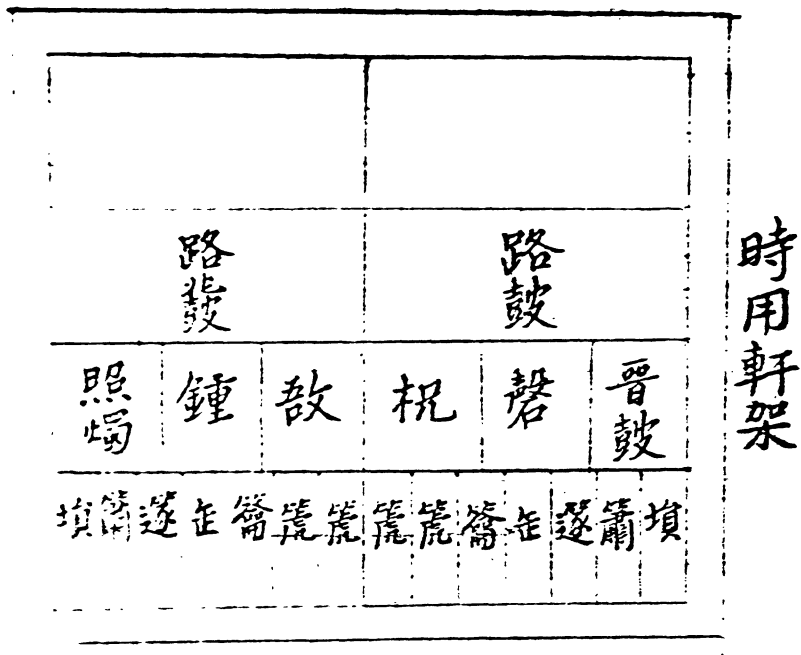


Figure 11a:
Courtyard Ensemble in the *T'aehakchi*

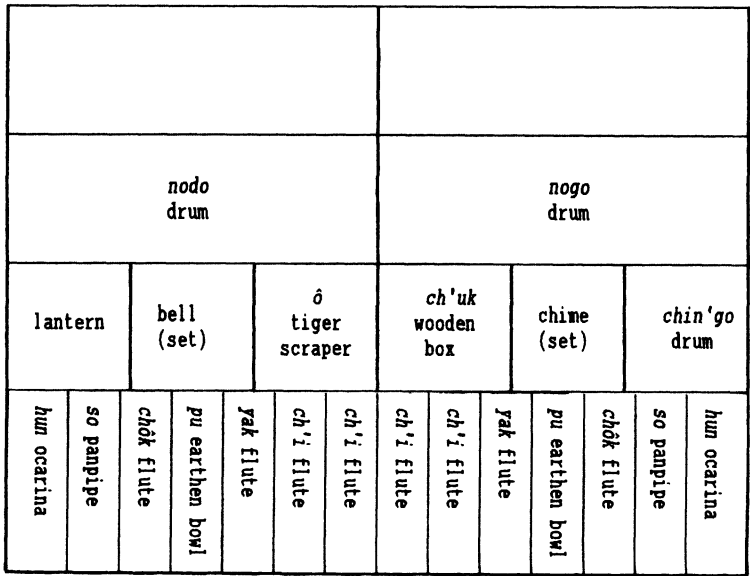


Figure 11b:
Courtyard Ensemble in the *T'aehakchi*

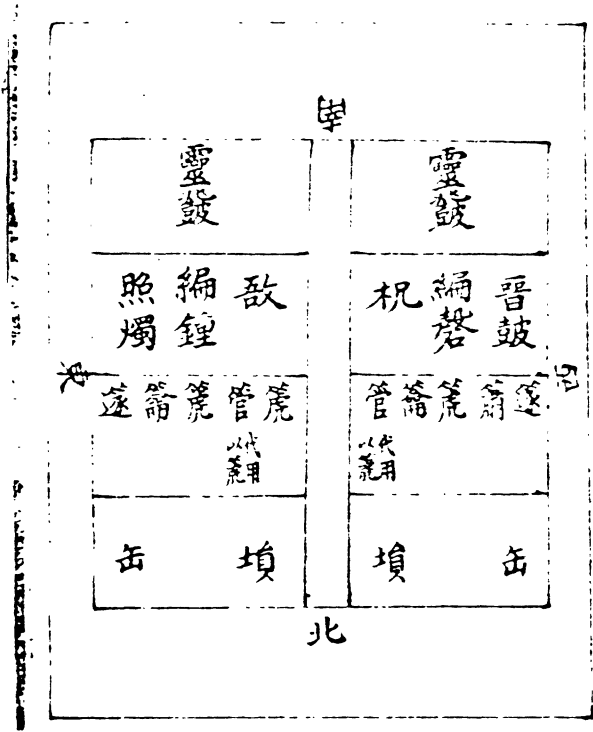


Figure 12a:
Courtyard Ensemble in the *Ch'un'guan t'onggo*

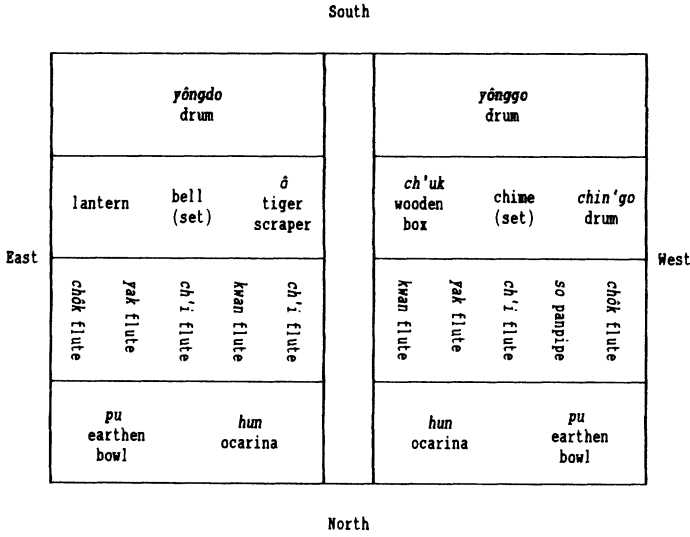


Figure 12b:
Courtyard Ensemble in the *Ch'un'guan t'onggo*

When I first attended the ceremony in 1973, there was no singing in the Courtyard Ensemble, or, for that matter, in the Terrace Ensemble either. The sizes of the ensembles approximated those of the eighteenth century (Provine 1975). A 1981 publication of the Korean Traditional Performing Arts Centre (*Kungnip kugagwôn*, formerly known in English as the National Classical Music Institute) does include the song texts, but as taken from historical sources (*Kungnip kugagwôn* 1981: 47). It also shows, as in Figures 13a and b, the Courtyard Ensemble as it has existed since about 1930, requiring seventeen performers, none of whom are singers (*Kungnip kugagwôn* 1981: 65). It may be worth recalling that at the beginning of this tradition in 1116, about 190 performers were required in the Korean Courtyard Ensemble, and in 1493, 124.

The modern performing style of this music is strikingly distinct from other types of Korean music. There are only two melodies, each thirty-two notes in length, though one is performed in a number of transpositions. A starting signal and a finishing signal, played on drums and other percussion, is provided for each performance of a melody. After the melody begins each melodic note is of the same duration, and every instrument follows a strictly consistent and orderly procedure: the bells and chimes are struck once for each note, the wind instruments play each note once and rise in pitch near the end of it. A clay bowl is struck in an accelerating pattern after each note has begun in the melodic instruments, and the drums play a punctuating pattern after every four melodic notes.

The rise in pitch in the wind instruments is now often taken to reflect Chinese performing practice, since no other genre of Korean music employs it. The rising inflection, however, is not described in any known historical source, and a musician who was on the court music scene in 1930 has told me that until then the tones were played absolutely flat, with no such inflection. But the musicians found that boring, and they changed it.

More recently there has been an attempt to recover the vocal practice of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as shown in recent recordings. In a recording of 1987, for example, there are two singers, and the number of instrumentalists has been increased to twenty-two (SKC 1987).

Summary

The development of the Courtyard Ensemble in Korea followed three stages: the initial, grandiose stage during the Koryô dynasty when the model was the ensemble of the Dasheng Institute of Northern Song; the second, less sizeable stage during the Chosôn dynasty when the model was that of the Chinese scholar Chen Yang, combined with melodies deriving from the Dasheng Institute; and the modern, much constrained stage with a small ensemble gradually attempting to restore aspects of its former existence. The second stage was initiated by a primarily documentary process within Korea, and not by a borrowing of performing style from China.

Many of the instruments, especially the sets of tuned bells and chimes, descend directly from Chinese prototypes, and there is much to be learned

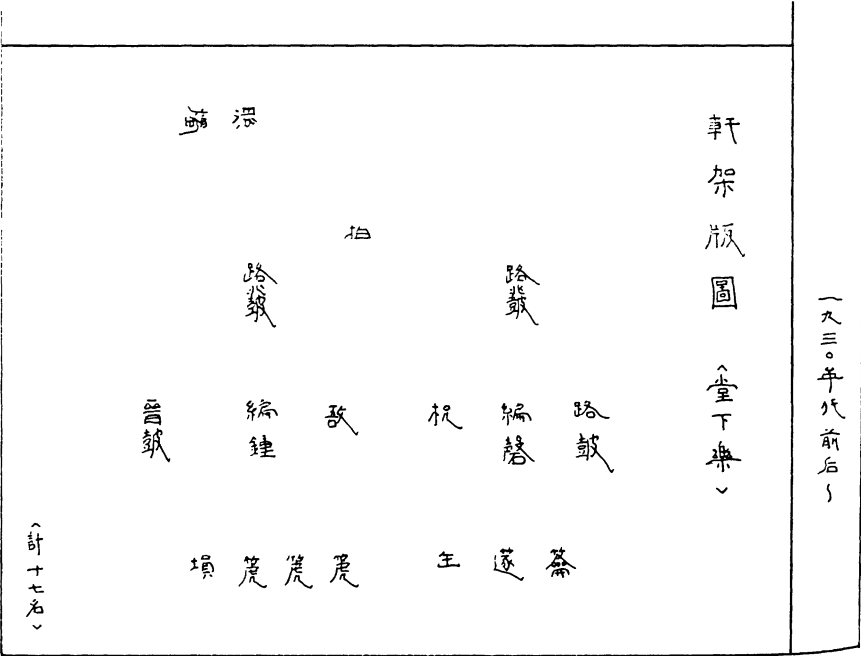


Figure 13a:
Korean Courtyard Ensemble ca. 1930

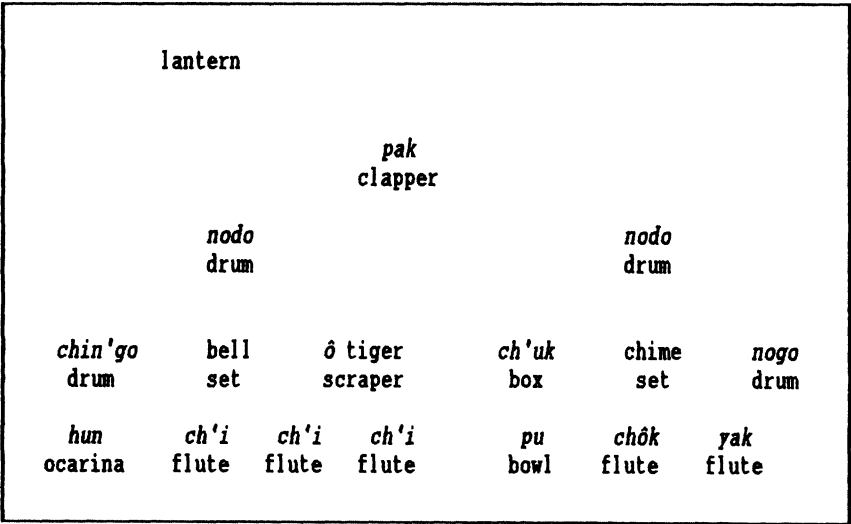


Figure 13b:
Korean Courtyard Ensemble ca. 1930

from them about the history of both Korean and Chinese instruments. The present performing practice, on the other hand, is the result of much change: the reappearance of singers has occurred in the past decade, and harkens back only to the eighteenth century; the most striking stylistic feature of the melodic style, the rising inflection of each note, appears to date only from the present century and to be a Korean innovation.

However ethnomusicologists may wish to apply the adjectives "traditional", "authentic", and "ancient", anyone considering the present condition of the Korean Courtyard Ensemble for *aak* and its relationship to Chinese musical style and instrumentation will have to take into account the sort of evidence which is partly presented here, rather than engage in unsubstantiated wishful thinking. I myself would say that the tradition of this music is thriving; that the instruments are authentic, descending directly from Chinese originals (and in some cases the instruments themselves are hundreds of years old); and that the modern performing style is virtually all Korean, rather than Chinese. Recent changes to the ensemble demonstrate that the musical performing practice is not moribund—it is vital rather than being a mere museum relic.

NOTES

1. The reasons for the gift, not entirely altruistic, are explored in Pratt 1976 and summarized in Provine 1988: 133-135.
2. Yang has made a few mistakes: there should be a pathway down the middle; the directional orientation should be specified (south at the bottom of the figure); and there should be 28 *di* flutes rather than 18. The English translation in Figure 1b corrects these, but omits a number of non-performing persons.
3. For example, *Songshi* 129.3014-3015 (Yang's source), *Zhenghe Wuli xinyi* 6.2a-4a, *Wenxian tongkao* 140.1240c-1241a, and *Song huiyao jigao* 5465 [music 5].21b-22b.
4. In this figure, the instrument names are given in Korean, with Chinese names in square brackets for comparison. All instrument names are also given in both pronunciations in the Glossary. The *chôk* flute is written in the *Koryôsa* with a different character than in the Chinese original or in later Korean sources (see Glossary).
5. Another possible reconstruction of the Korean ensemble has been made by the Korean scholar Song Pangsong (1988: 262). Apart from a horizontal orientation of the inner rows of instruments, a matter of interpretation, it is essentially in keeping with the scheme of Yang Yinliu.
6. The main studies of this development are Yi Hyegu 1975, and Song Hyejin 1985. Song Pangsong (1988: 263-269) takes the more negative view that only instruments, not performing practices, had been imported from Song China in the first place; recent, as yet unpublished documentary work by Song Hyejin makes this view unlikely.
7. The source is an early part of the *Orye ûiju* [Five Rites] which was appended to the *Sejong sillok* (see References). On this work, see Provine 1988: 34-38.
8. *Nogo* drums are used in sacrificial rites to human spirits. The pitch C is taken as the foundation pitch in this and later figures; C is the pitch used in Korea from at least the fifteenth century to the present.
9. Addition of *-do* drums in the corners, removal of solo *nogo* drum at top, and addition of two *chin'go* drums. *Noego* and *noedo* drums, used in rites to heavenly spirits, are substituted here for the *nogo* drums in Figure 5.
10. Several *-do* drums have been added, and all single bells and chimes have been removed. *Yônggo* and *yôngdo* drums, used for rites to earthly spirits, are here substituted for the *nogo*, *nodo*, *noego*, and *noedo* in earlier figures.
11. On this source, see Provine 1988: 116-140.
12. The process of modification is detailed in Provine 1988: 153-162.
13. The *nogo* and *nodo* drums, for human spirits, are shown in this figure.
14. The *yônggo* and *yôngdo*, for earthly spirits, are shown in this figure. The commentary explains how different drums are used for different types of spirits.

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GLOSSARY

aak 雅樂

Akhak kwebö'm 樂學軌範

chaosheng [Kor. sosaeng] 巢笙

Chen Xiangdao 陳祥道

Chen Yang 陳陽

Chengzu 成祖

chi [Kor. ch'i] 篪

chin'go [Chin. jingu] 晉鼓

chök [Chin. di] 箎 (Chinese and most Korean sources), 笛 (*Koryösa*)

Chongmyo 宗廟

Chosön 朝鮮

Chosön wangjo sillok 朝鮮王朝實錄

Chūgoku Chōsen ongaku chōsa kikō 中國朝鮮音樂調查紀行

ch'uk [Chin. zhu] 祝

Chūngbo Munhōn pigo 增補文獻備考

Ch'un'gwan t'onggo 春官通考

Dasheng yuepu 大晟樂譜

Dashengfu 大晟府

di [Kor. chök] 箎

-do 鼓

gagaku 雅樂

Han'guk ūmak sōsōl 韓國音樂序說

hōn'ga 軒架

Huizong 徽宗

hun [Chin. xun] 埴 or 埴

hwa 和

jinju [Kor. chin'go] 晉鼓

Kaesōng 開城

Koryō 高麗

Koryō sidae aak ūi pyōnch'ōn kwa chisok 高麗時代 雅樂의 變遷과 持續

Koryō Taesōngak ūi pyōnch'ōn 高麗 大晟樂의 變遷

Koryō ūmaksa yōn'gu 高麗音樂史研究

Koryōsa 高麗史

Kugak (Chōngak) 國樂 (正樂)

Kugak chōnjip 國樂全集

Kugagwōn nonmunjip 國樂院論文集

Kukcho orye sōrye 國朝五禮序例

Kukcho oryeūi 國朝五禮儀

kūm [Chin. qin] 琴

Kungnip kugagwōn 國立國樂院

- kwan 管
 leigu [Kor. noego] 雷鼓
 leitao [Kor. noedo] 雷鼓
 Lin Yu 林宇
 Ling Jingyan 凌景延
 Lishu 禮書
 Ming 明
 Munmyo 文廟
 noedo [Chin. leitao] 雷鼓
 noego [Chin. leigu] 雷鼓
 nogo 路鼓
 nodo 路鼓
 ō [Chin. yu] 畝
 Orye ūiju 五禮儀注
 pak 拍
 paosheng [Kor. p'osaeng] 匏笙
 pu 缶
 qin [Kor. kŭm] 琴
 saeng 笙
 se [Kor. sŭl] 瑟
 Sejong 世宗
 Sejong sillok 世宗實錄
 Sibū beiyao 四部備要
 so [Chin. xiao] 簫
 Sŏkchŏn 釋奠
 Song 宋
 Song huiyao jigao 宋會要輯稿
 Song Hyejin 宋惠眞
 Song Pangsong 宋芳松
 Song Wei Hanjin yue yu Dashengfu 宋魏漢津樂與大晟府
 Songshi 宋史
 sosaeng [Chin. chaosheng] 巢笙
 sŭl [Chin. se] 瑟
 T'aehakchi 太學志
 (Ming) Taizu 明太祖
 Tanabe Hisao 田邊 尚雄
 tŭngga 登歌
 u [Chin. yu] 宇
 xiao [Kor. so] 簫
 Xu Song 徐松
 xun [Kor. hun] 埧 or 壎
 yak 筈
 yang 陽
 Yang Jialuo 楊家駱
 Yang Yinliu 楊蔭瀏
 yayue 雅樂
 Yejong 睿宗
 Yi Hyegu 李惠求

yin 陰

Yingyin Wenyuange Siku quanshu 影印文淵閣四庫全書

Yiwangjik aakpu wa inyöndül maejöttön pakkat saramdül

이왕직 아악부와 인연을 맺었던 바깥 사람들

Yiwangjik aakpu wa ümak indül 이왕직 아악부와 음악 인들

yöngdo 鼗鼓

yönggo 鼗鼓

Yongle 永樂

yu [Kor. ö] (tiger scraper) 鼓

yu [Kor. u] 竿

Yuan 元

Yueshu 樂書

Zhenghe Wuli xinyi 政和五禮新儀

Zhongguo gudai yinyue shigao 中國古代音樂史稿

Zhongguo yinyue shiliao 中國音樂史料

Zhouli 周禮

zhu [Kor. ch'uk] 祝

韓國에 있는 雅樂의 軒架

軒架와 登歌에 使用되었던 많은 數의 樂器들은 北宋 時代의 徽宗皇帝에 衣해 1116년에 高麗에 傳해졌다. 많은 어려움에도 不拘하고 軒架와 登歌를 爲한 雅樂 演奏의 傳統이 現在까지 傳해지게 되었다.

韓國 軒架의 發達은 세가지 段階로 나눌 수 있다. 初期 段階는 北宋의 大晟府의 樂器와 音樂이 모델이 되었던 高麗 時代의 莊嚴한 段階이다. 中間 段階는 朝鮮王朝 時代의 좀더 작은 規模의 段階로서 宋나라 時代의 學者 陳旸에 衣해 記述되었던 것과 大晟府에서 派生되었던 가락을 調和시킨 것이다. 現代 段階는 過去의 形態를 回復하려고 漸次 試圖하는 많이 縮約된 段階이다. 中間 段階는 中國의 演奏 形態를 빌리지 않고 朝鮮 時代 基本의인 文書의 過程에 衣해 創案되었다.

많은 現代의 雅樂 樂器들, 特히 編鐘과 編磬은 中國의 모델로부터 直接 傳해진 것으로서 이것들은 中國과 韓國의 樂器들의 歷史에 關하여 많은 것을 가르쳐 주고 있다. 그러나 現在의 演奏 形態는 많이 變形되어 傳해진 것이다. 例를 들어 唱人의 再現은 過去 數年 동안에 다시 發生하였고 但只 18世紀까지만 나타났다. 또한, 各音의 마지막마다 그 音이 조금씩 올라가는 것은 가장 印象的인 가락의 形態로서 但只 今世紀부터 나타난 것이며 韓國의 獨創의인 것이다. 最近에 나타난 軒架의 몇가지 變化는 音樂 演奏 形態가 消滅되어 但只 博物館에 간혀있는 것이 아니라 보다 生動的이라는 것을 示唆해 주고 있다.