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1910-1911: Years that changed Seoul's music

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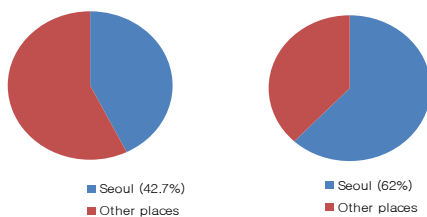
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In Korea, performance venues have long been concentrated in Seoul. According to the Korean Arts Council (2011), in 2010, 42.7% of all the Western music concerts held in the country took place in Seoul, while 62% of the Korean music concerts took place there (see Diagram 1). 31% of the venues that focus on Western music are located in Seoul, along with 48% of those that showcase Korean music (see Diagram 2). Most of the organisations that create and broadcast contemporary Korean popular music are also based in Seoul. Seoul must surely be one of the fastest changing cities in the world – not just superficially in terms of architecture but also in terms of technology and popular music culture. Surviving documents indicate that Seoul was also the centre for much musical activity in the past and, in this paper, I will explore what the musical environment of Seoul might have been like 100 years ago, around 1910.

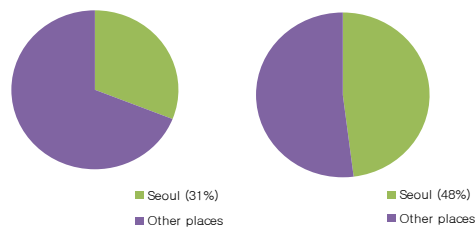
(Diagram 1)

Performance Style in Korea, 2010;
Western music (left), Korean music (right)



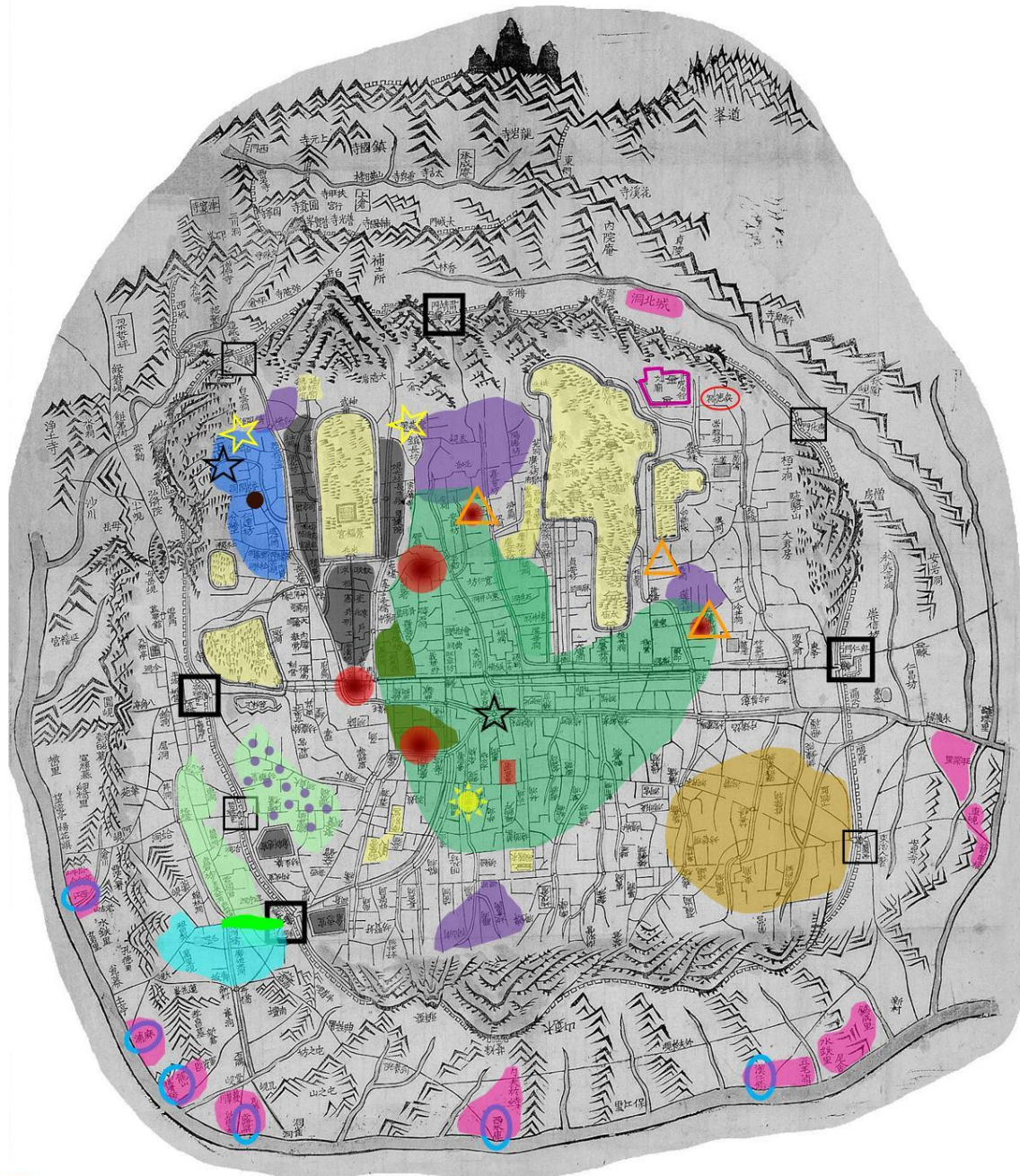
(Diagram 2)






















Performance venues in Korea, 2010 :
Western Music (left), Korean Music (right)



1910 is commonly understood to be a pivotal year in modern Korean history – the year when the Chosŏn dynasty was dissolved and Japanese colonial rule began. However, most music scholarship relating to the colonial period focuses on the 1920s and 1930s, when new genres, record industries, and broadcasting activities instigated profound changes in people's tastes. Why is there so little published relating to the 1910s? In books about the history of Korean music by Chang Sahun (1988) and Song Bang-song (1991), four incidents are recorded, which I shall focus on in this paper: the dissolution of the Royal Music Institute (*Changagwŏn*) in 1910, the establishment of associations for female entertainers (*kisaeng chohap*) in 1911, the founding of the Chosŏn *Chŏngak* Institute (*Chosŏn Chŏngak Chŏnsŭpso*) in 1911, and the publication of a songtext book called *Song Collections for General Education* (*Pot'ong Kyoyuk Ch'anggajip*) in 1910.

A reworked 19th century map of Seoul (c. 1830), showing where patrons and musicians lived or performed and including other significant buildings and locations.



- | | | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|--|---|
|  | Urban administrators' homes |  | Royal palaces |  | Gates, big and small |
|  | Wealthy merchants and professionals' homes and work |  | Aristocrats' homes, also amongst private merchants (spots) |  | Government buildings |
|  | Sagyech'uk area |  | School of Confucian Studies |  | Changagwŏn (Royal Music Institute) |
|  | Royal staff/high-ranking enforcers (often involved in kibang) |  | Kibang (entertainment rooms where kisaeng worked) |  | Institute for ūinyŏ (medical women/performers) |
|  | Low-ranking army officers' homes (often also working as farmers) |  | Communities where Sŏnsori sant'aryŏng groups lived/sang |  | Ch'ilp'ae: a large market area |
|  | Small private merchants |  | Butchers for the upper class |  | Official merchants' homes/shops |
|  | Han River merchants' work places |  | Homes of court eunuchs |  | Famous poetry (black) and song (yellow) societies |

A Brief summary of music culture in the late 19th century and early 20th century

As a preliminary, I'll briefly explain what music culture was like beforehand – at the end of the 19th century and in the early 20th century, focusing on patrons, musicians, and the venues for performance in Seoul.

The above map is a reworked one from the 19th century,¹ showing where different types of people lived and worked. The following acted as patrons: aristocrats, urban administrators, merchants, farmers, professionals, Han River merchants, and riverside-dwelling commoners. Meanwhile, the following acted as performers: female entertainers, court musicians, riverside singers, semi-professional commoner singers in this area, and semi-professional middle-status singers (see Park Sung-Hee 2011). The most common venues for musical performance were: the home – in the traditional gentlemen's guest room (*sarangbang*) or back garden –, song society venues, mountains and rivers (for picnicking or boating parties), entertainment rooms (*kibang*), farmers' dugouts (*umjip* or *kip'un sarang*), the royal court and market places.

From the beginning of the 20th century, when stage-performance culture was imported, new relationships were introduced between musicians, theatre owners, sponsors and audiences. These relationships were more complicated than those of the previous era. The first stage theatre was established for the use of the Royals in 1902 (although, unfortunately, they were not able to see any performances until 1904 on account of a smallpox epidemic). Then, in 1907 and 1908, the first theatres for use by the general public were established, called Kwangmudae and Wŏn'gaksa. Since that time, the audience no longer shared the same space as the performers but rather watched musical performance from a distance: music became a staged art.

Another change in the early 20th century was the introduction of Western music. The very first introductions were in the form of hymns, disseminated by Christian schools such as Paejae (in 1885) and Ewha (in 1886). The next major Western musical introductions came in 1901 in the form of military band music, under the German conductor Franz Eckert (1852-1916). Bands such as this played a variety of anthems and marches, folk song and hymn adaptations, as well as newly created works (see Song Bang-song 1991:565). In 1907, when the Korean military

¹ This map is taken from Park Sung-Hee 2011:330. The additions to Kim Chŏngho (c.1804-c.1866)'s original map are based on data provided in the following sources: Kang Myŏnggwan 1997:77-8 and 2001:146-7; Yi Kahwan, cited Kang Myŏnggwan 2003:359-60; Chŏng Naegyo [1765], translated into modern Korean by Yi Usŏng and Im Hyŏngt'aek 1996:122; Yi Sŏngmu 1991:107 and 1999:200-202; Hansan Kŏsa [1844], translated into modern Korean by Yi Pyŏnggi *et al.* 1974:109; An Minyŏng [c.1880], translated into modern Korean by Kim Shinjung 2003:65; Yu Man'gong [1843]1993:111; *Chosŏn Wangjo Shillok* (Annals of the Chosŏn Dynasty), volume 42: 608; Chŏng Okcha 1976:39-43; Kwŏn Tuhwan 1985:66-70; Sŏng Kyŏngnin 1958:53,71; Chang Sahun 1961:220 and 1966:13. Kim Chŏngho was a professional cartographer who lived in Mallijae in the Sagyech'uk area. The map is currently preserved in the Korea University Museum Collection.

was dissolved, the band changed from a military band into a private concert band, performing in this role until 1915.

The Japanese government had been preparing for the take-over of Korea well before 1910. Following their victory against Russia in 1904, they began to intervene more actively in Korean politics, adopting a forceful advisory role. In conjunction with political reforms, they also enforced regulations to disempower performers. In 1905, they imposed a ban on performances by female entertainers in the court and made it illegal for shamans to perform their ritual arts in any context. Later in the same year, the Ŭlsa treaty (*Ŭlsa Choyak*) was made between five Korean politicians and the Japanese government, signing away Korea's diplomatic rights and enabling the Japanese administration to be based in Korea. In 1907, the military was dissolved and a Japanese police force was introduced in Seoul and, in 1908, court rituals were reduced in number from 792 per year to 201 and all publications had thereafter to be granted permission by the Japanese authorities. Also from 1908, performers had to show their performance programme to the authorities prior to every performance. Three years later, it became illegal for Buddhist monks to perform ritual dance or vocal music in any temple (see No Tongŭn 1995:561-67). This is some of the historical background that leads up to the years 1910 and 1911.

The dissolution of the Royal Music Institute (*Changagwŏn*)

In 1910, the Royal Music Institute was dissolved. From that time on, the musicians no longer performed for court ceremonies and continued their existence only as a private performance group, sponsored by the disempowered remaining members of the Yi royal household. Accordingly, the Institute's name was eventually changed to the *Yiwangjik Aaktae*. However, prior to 1910, the Institute had already been through a long period of decline and a number of earlier name changes (passing through the *Kyobangsa* in 1897, *Changakkwa* in 1907 and *Changakpu* in 1908). In 1897, there had been 772 members, but following interventions by the Japanese government, this number had decreased dramatically to 305 in 1907, 240 in 1908, and 189 in 1910.

With no new recruits, the number of performers continued to dwindle, reaching a critically small number by 1920. The royal patrons were keen to train nine new musicians to ensure continuation but were facing a financial crisis. Ironically, it was part thanks to a Japanese musicologist, Tanabe Hisao (1883-1984), that the institute was able to survive beyond that point. After visiting the institute in April 1921, he was sufficiently moved by what he found to write a letter to the Japanese government:²

I have heard that the Japanese government has been considering closing down one of two establishments supported by the Yi royal family: either the zoo or

² Some musicologists such as No Tongŭn (1995) and Kim Suhyŏn (1999) insist that Hisao's report, based on his fieldwork in 1921, needs to be reassessed because his trip to Korea was related to political purposes.

the music institute. I have also heard that the zoo has been considered more worthy of preservation because it is useful to the people. I think that, if we close the zoo now, it would be possible to reopen it in the future. On the other hand, traditional music and dance like *aak* will be lost forever if it is not supported; even if you were to make musical notations, this would not be sufficient to recreate the music in the future (extract from 1921 fieldwork report, translated into Korean by Kim Söngjin 1997:97-118, 2000:175-217).

New associations for female entertainers (*kisaeng chohap*)

Very soon after the official banning of female entertainers' court performances in 1908, the Japanese government introduced a set of regulations to control the activities of *kisaeng* female entertainers and prostitutes in all other contexts also. The exact same regulations were applied to both groups, regardless of specialisms. Both had to visit the main police station to receive permission to perform in the form of a license – which, again, was identical regardless of specialism. Naturally, the indiscriminate application of this same system encouraged the general populace to regard all performing women in much the same light.

In 1909, an association for prostitutes was established in Shigung-dong – today's T'eogyero area. This served as a training institution and a mutual support centre. Two years later, equivalent associations were established for those *kisaeng* who performed the arts: the *tadong chohap* and *kwanggyo chohap*. All of the *kisaeng* who joined these two associations had once been employed in the court as medical women or seamstresses but, at the same time, they had worked as entertainers, receiving tuition from famous musicians. In 1917, all associations were revised into so-called *kwönbön* (Jap. *kenban*), closely based on equivalent institutions for *geisha* in Japan. It has often been said that the *kisaeng* went on to perform a crucial role in the preservation of Korean musical traditions during the Japanese colonial period (see, for example, Kwön Tohäi 2001 and 2002), but it is also true that there are many references to the *kisaeng's* role as prostitutes or hired companions (see, for example, McCann 1974; Kawamura Minato 2002; Pak Chongsöng 2003).

From the time when the regulations for controlling *kisaeng* were defined and applied equally to all *kisaeng*, a particular set of associations was forged: '*kisaeng*' equalled 'music, dance, drink and prostitution'. This has had enduring implications for the status of Korean traditional music, people unconsciously recognising it as low status music for people with questionable morals.

The founding of the Chosön Chöngak Institute (*Chosön Chöngak Chönsüpsö*)

Korean musicologists use the term *chöngak* (lit., correct, right, or proper music) to denote music that was previously enjoyed and supported by the aristocrats and urban middle class people in the late 18th to late 19th centuries. This term, '*chöngak*',

was actually originally introduced by the Chosŏn *Chŏngak* Institute, founded in 1911 (see Hahn Man-young 1990:68 and 1991:244; see also Lee Hye-ku 1993:17; Chŏn Chiyŏng 2004:299). This institute not only introduced the category but also determined which forms were to be included within it and which were not. While zither-centred ensemble music and various vocal genres such as *kagok* (classical lyric songs), *kasa* (narrative songs), and *shijo* (sung short poems) were admitted, other areas of repertoire – including the songs referred to as ‘*chapka*’ (miscellaneous songs) – were not.

In the cases of *kasa* and *chapka*, it is apparent that, previously, there was no established consensus regarding which categories the various songs fitted into. In some surviving notation books from the late 19th century, including *Namhun T’aep’yŏngga* (Southern Fragrance Peace Song, 1863) and *Ayang Kŭmbo* (Notation for Lofty Dulcimer, 1880), several of today’s *kasa* songs are recorded in the category of *chapka* songs. In other sources, the opposite situation can be found. Accordingly, the Korean historian and literature specialist Ch’oe Namsŏn (1890-1957), in his book, *Chosŏn Sangshik Mundap Sokp’yŏn* (A Sequel Book of the Questions and Answers for Common Sense about Chosŏn, 1947), states that there was no definite differentiation between *kasa* and *chapka*. It was the Chosŏn *Chŏngak* Institute that changed this situation, pinpointing exactly which pieces belonged to which categories and thereby encouraging the establishment of a fixed canon of traditional music (for more details see Park Sung-Hee 2011:162-4; Chŏn Chiyŏng 2004:298).

Although the Chosŏn *Chŏngak* Institute was the very first non-governmental music institute, it was still ultimately controlled by pro-Japanese political factions. In particular, it was sponsored by the so-called *Chŏngak* Preservation Society (*Chŏngak Yujihoe*). According to Korean musicologist No Tongŭn (1995:738), most of the Society members were Koreans who had actively been involved in projects to ensure Japanese rule, receiving European-style titles such as Duke and Count as reward. One of the members, Yi Chiyong, was even one of the so-called ‘five enemies’ (*ojŏk*) who had effectively sold Korea to Japan in 1905.

The Chosŏn *Chŏngak* Institute not only preserved traditional music but also actively promoted the learning and performance of Western art music. By 1914, the Institute had produced 87 individuals who would represent ‘proper’ music-making in Korea. Included amongst the 53 who specialised in Western art music was Hong Nan’p’a (1897-1941) who was an influential early ambassador for the form – himself a composer, violinist and music educator. In spite of its profound influence, the Institute was not active for long; according to Chang Sahun (1974:75-6), it went bankrupt in 1916 following financial misconduct by some of its members. This was potentially disastrous for the various genres of *chŏngak* in particular because there was no other institute that taught the repertoires. However, in 1930, the previously mentioned *Yiwangjik Aakpu* – the remnants of the Royal Court Institute – took on the role of fostering these genres in addition to *aak* court rituals. And so *aak* and *chŏngak* came to be closely associated in people’s minds.

Song Collection for General Education (*Pot'ong Kyoyuk Ch'anggajip*)

A fourth music-related event, which was to have a profound enduring influence on music in Korea, was the publication of the Song Collection for General Education (*Pot'ong Kyoyuk Ch'anggajip*) in 1910. From 1911, the Japanese government decreed that this book should be used in all schools in Korea to educate children musically and this was stated in the book's preface (see also No Tongün 1995:604; Pak Ūn'gyōng 1999: 43-9).

The book presents 27 songs, all translated from Japanese into Korean. Twenty-one are *ch'angga* songs, using the *yonanuki* scale (a type of pentatonic scale familiar from Japan) and 2/4 or 4/4 time signatures. The remaining six are a selection of Western folk songs and hymns. These same songs have since been republished in numerous follow-ups, entering the musical consciousness of millions of Koreans up to the present day. For example, a tune called 'butterfly' (*nabiya nabiya*), which I have known since kindergarten, was one of those songs included in the original collection.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have looked at four music-related developments that happened in 1910 and 1911 – considering what came before and after. These developments were closely related, all being concerned with music education, introducing new ways of transmitting music within institutional settings, and being instrumental in establishing a new set of musical values. The Chosŏn *Chōngak* Institute set out to establish exactly which styles and repertoires constituted 'high art', promoting the values of the high status sponsors. Meanwhile, the *kisaeng* institutions encouraged people to associate both the *kisaeng* and her arts with 'low living'; as a result, for decades afterwards, many people chose to avoid Korean traditional music. The Royal Music Institute, which from 1910 mainly performed music without court ritual and ceremony, encouraged the perception of certain genres as 'museum pieces' – and therefore 'boring' in the minds of many. Finally, the publication of the song collection for general education deeply effected people's musical understanding, implanting a new vocabulary of melodic and rhythmic patterns that has endured ever since. And so I conclude that the years 1910 and 1911 really were years that changed Seoul's music – and therefore Korea's music.

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