Keepers of Tradition: Women in South Korean Traditional Music

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Abstract

Many cultures have seen a decline in the traditional arts over the past centuries. In response, some governments have created institutions of preservation to financially support traditional artists; however the decline and the subsequent institutionalisation have caused significant changes in transmission, study, performance practice and role of musician. Throughout patriarchal societies, this process often leads to a division between men as innovators and women as preservers. In Korea, as elsewhere, female musicians have become accepted—and even predominate—in fields from which they traditionally had been excluded. This paper examines this shift towards female musicians through an analysis of the gender roles of Neo-Confucian culture and the association of women with the preservation of tradition. Genres associated with song and dance as performed by courtesan artists (kisaeng) and Shaman ritualists were the first to accept female performers. Post-war South Korea created a model for cultural preservation with the Cultural Properties Protection Law of 1962. Under government preservation, major universities added traditional arts to previously existing Western classical music programs, and traditional genres, such as p’ungmul and p’ansori, gained new popularity with the nationalist movement. The analysis of the South Korean paradigm is crucial to understanding the preservation of traditional arts within rapidly globalising societies.

Keywords: Music, Gender, Cultural Preservation, Courtesans, Colonial Studies, Nationalism

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Introduction

In both folk and aristocratic genres of Korean traditional music, instrumentalists in public spaces have traditionally been male. Only male musicians could participate in Confucian ritual music and aristocratic instrumental suites. Women who participated in traditional music were primarily singers and dancers. Kisaeng (妓生) would perform aristocratic songs and dances while male musicians would accompany; female shaman ritualists, known as Mudang in Korea (무당, 巫堂), would perform kut (굿) while male shaman musicians would accompany on instruments; women would sing folk songs while working, celebrating, or in lamentations.

Through the Japanese Imperial Rule of Korea (1910-1945), there was a period of decline in traditional performing arts. The movement towards modernisation saw a rise in popularity of Western classical musicians, who were paid far more than their traditional music counterparts. Traditional music and musicians became stigmatised as old fashioned and superstitious, particularly those who perform ritual practices such as Mudang or Shaman musicians. Several genres, such as the aristocratic vocal genres, sijo (時調), kagok (歌曲), and kasa (歌辭), p’ansori (盤索里) and sanjo (散調) were performed by kisaeng for Japanese and foreign audiences during colonial rule. Following the Korean War there was even a greater period of decline, which was followed by a preservation effort through the Cultural Heritage Protection Act (Munhwajae pohobŏp, 문화재 보호법) of 1962. Through this process of preservation, there seems to be a shift in the practices of traditional music from past to present. The majority of the older generation of musicians is male; however, the majority of students currently enrolled in traditional music programs in South Korean universities today are female.

This paper explores the process of change from the last dynasty to present in order to understand the shift in the association of traditional music from male traditionally to female presently. The paper will follow a timeline from the late Chosŏn dynasty, through the Japanese occupation, to the second half of the twentieth century where Korean music becomes an object of preservation and the voice of the nationalist movement. Through this process, each section will explore the role of Confucian women as keepers of family traditions and customs in effort to understand the shift towards female musicians over the past century.

Confucian Society: Class, Education, and Division

During the Chosŏn Dynasty (朝鮮, 1392-1910), there was strict social order within a class system: yangban (兩班), elite members of society divided into civil and military service
based on descent and heredity, political influence, economic wealth and Confucian learning; chungin (中人), “middle people” who could not sit civil service examinations but could hold lower-ranking positions; p’yŏngmin (平民), farmers, fishermen and merchants; and ch’ŏnmin (贱民), slaves, servants, professional entertainers, butchers, leatherworkers and shamans. The music performed varied greatly in function and style, while the musicians themselves played very different social roles. Yangban and chungin gentlemen might have practiced music privately as an expression of refinement and intelligence, but those that actively took part in the performance of music belonged to the lowest class, ch’ŏnmin.

The function, performance practices and performance spaces of secular music were equally varied between the classes, and these class divisions had equally significant connections with the gender of the performer. Within the court, music was performed for royal banquets or for private entertainment. In both of these circumstances, the audience and musicians, no matter how public or private, would be held to a strict social order. The instrumental musicians and audience of court music performances would be male; female musicians would perform music on a smaller scale for the women of the court. The music performed for the yangban upper class would take place in private spaces within the home or in restaurants. Performers would either be literati members of the yangban class, lower class performers patronised by the hosting yangban or kisaeng (professional female artists), while the audience would consist of upper-class men and kisaeng women.

Like many patriarchal societies, the Neo-Confucian culture of the late Chosŏn Dynasty created very strict roles of dominance and submission both within the home and within the public sphere. The family was managed externally by a patriarchal figure and internally by a matriarchal one. This division can be seen in the terms uri chip saram (우리 집 사람), meaning “our house person”, used sometimes to refer to the wife, versus pakkat ŏrin (바깥 어른), meaning “outside adult” and referring to the husband. While women had limited access to the public sphere, they did have great power and responsibility within the home. The male head of the household spent his time in the public sphere and did not have the knowledge to control the daily economic and practical happenings of the home; therefore, he allocated these responsibilities to his wife. Martina Deuchler says of this:

Domestic peace and prosperity depended on the way of a wife exerting her authority. It was the wife’s task to keep the customs pure. This was a heavy

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7 The female performers for the female members of court were accompanied sometimes by men on wind or percussion instruments because these instruments were seen as too difficult or inappropriate for women. Among these male musicians, there was a preference for blind musicians in order to maintain the appropriate seclusion of the female members of the court (ibid., 256-257).

8 Ibid., 99.

9 Ibid.

responsibility because the purity of the customs as they were cultivated in the domestic sphere was directly correlated with the rise and fall of the dynasty.\textsuperscript{11}

Women were charged with governing the education of children, keeping family traditions, maintaining the household and social status of the family. While sons were taught academic subjects to acquire knowledge to use outside the home, daughters were educated in morality based on Confucian virtue. The purpose of the education of women was to enforce the Neo-Confucian social structure both within and outside of the home.\textsuperscript{12} While the focus of male education was on scholarship, female education focused primarily on virtue in service of the social and familial obligation to preserve family harmony and to maintain the purity of customs.\textsuperscript{13} As traditional music moved from the public sphere of popular culture to the marginalised object of preservation through the twentieth century, it is this role of woman as the preserver of the purity of customs that leads to the cultural association of women with traditional music in the current system of preservation.

The influence of Neo-Confucianism on the separation of the genders was not equal through all levels of society:

It is only when the household can produce an economic surplus for investment in status-enhancing activity in the public sphere, and when the household’s genealogical position in the lineage is prominent enough to merit such investment, that the inside/outside division of labor allows the house head to attain a great deal more power in the public sphere while his wife remains at home.\textsuperscript{14}

The division of the sexes into public and private spheres was a marker of status, and the seclusion of women in the private sphere was not possible for lower-class families that would have required the income of both male and female members of the family. Both Shaman and kisaeng, as members of the lowest class of society, were allowed special privileges in the public sphere due to their low social status and position often as the primary money earners for their families. The participation of women in the male public sphere through the practice of kisaeng and Shamans might have influenced the acceptance of female participation in genres related to singing and dancing. Additionally, the role of male Shaman musicians accompanying the female Shaman ritualists is reflected in the prevalence of female soloist with male supporting accompaniment.

The use of ritual music and the religions practiced varied between the classes and over time. Within the court, ritual music existed to create a peaceful society through balance and order and to offer respect to Confucius and the Royal Ancestors. These rituals reflected the social hierarchy and enforced the positions of power and submission within Neo-Confucian society. Buddhism was practiced widely throughout the rest of society, although it was also occasionally practiced within the court by women.\textsuperscript{15} Shamanist rites were held by members of the lowest class of society, and would be attended by all members of the village community, both male and female, and typically sponsored by the

\textsuperscript{12} Deuchler, “The Tradition”, 6-7.
\textsuperscript{13} Deuchler, “The Tradition”, 4.
\textsuperscript{14} Sorensen, “Women, Men”, 77.
\textsuperscript{15} Boudewijn Walraven, “Popular Religion in a Confucianized Society”, in Culture and the State in Late Choson Korea, edited by JaHyun Kim Haboush and Martina Deuchler (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University East Asia Monographs, 1999), 160.
local yangban. Shaman ritualists were often female while accompanying Shaman musicians were often the male relatives of the female Shaman.

In Shamanic rituals, the Shaman acted as a medium between the living and the restless spirits of the dead. While Confucianism and Buddhism both acknowledged ancestors and great masters of the past, Confucianism did not include the sense of spirit interaction with the living nor the role of a medium acting between the two. In Confucianism the highest-ranking person performs the ritual (the king); in Buddhism ritual is performed by members of a religious community (the monks); and in Shamanism the practitioner has to have special access to the spiritual world. As the practices are divided between the classes, the hierarchical system of dominance is projected upon the ritual practices. This division can also be seen through the practitioners of ritual, with women excluded from Confucian rituals of the court, and through the large number of female Shamans in shamanic ritual. Lee Yong-shik contends:

As women became increasingly excluded from participation in such areas as education and social activities with men, one of the few remaining avenues for their self-realization was shamanism. As a result, the government inadvertently made the shaman role more accessible to women. Since shamanism remained a persistent force in the life of Koreans in spite of official oppression, it provided its female specialists with an unexpectedly powerful avenue for continuing their influence within society.  

As practiced, these rituals reinforce the social stereotypes of men as the rational and orderly Confucian scholar and women as emotional and chaotic spirit-possessed Shaman. Buddhism and Shamanism are practiced by the oppressed lower classes while only men participated in Confucian ritual, the official state religion of the male public sphere. This association between Confucian ritual and men and between Buddhism or Shamanism and women directly relates to the greater acceptance of women in musical genres derived from the latter practices (such as p’ansori and sanjo); Confucian ritual music has remained largely male despite the overall feminisation of the role of musician in Korean society.

**Kisaeng Power: Outsides of Neo-Confucianism**

*Kisaeng* held a position in Korean Confucian society that was quite different from other women. In a way, they existed between male and female as part of the male public sphere while still in a subservient position. While they were members of the lowest class of society, they still were never without food or clothing and were permitted to wear the colors and fabrics of noble women and silver and gold jewelry.  

*Kisaeng* existed at an almost equal status with men regarding access to public events and freedom of expression. Proper Confucian women were admonished to adhere to the roles in society which they were taught, which meant that while the “ideal Confucian woman repressed her feelings, the kisaeng of the Yi [Chosŏn] dynasty expressed the essential character of the Korean women [and] their world was free of hypocrisy and disguise”. This freedom allowed to *kisaeng* can been seen in their emotional expression in the male sphere that

17 Y.C. Kim, *Women*, 140.
18 Ibid.
other women subject to Neo-Confucian morality would not have been allowed. While having more freedom, kisaeng were still subject to the desires of their patron and would learn and perform what was in strongest demand. Therefore, as genres such as p’ansori and sanjo became popular among aristocratic audiences, kisaeng would begin to study and perform these genres. In this way, many of the first female performers of traditionally male genres were kisaeng. As traditional music was removed from the popular culture with the Japanese occupation and introduction of Western classical music, kisaeng acted as preservers of many genres of traditional music for their new patrons, a development linked to the interest of the ruling Japanese and foreign tourists.

The education of kisaeng in official schools mirrored the education of upper-class males, which emphasised Chinese classics, calligraphy, art and music. However, unlike the male upper-class scholars who pursued music as a personal practice and expression of virtue and intelligence, the entertainment interests of their audience most likely dictated the music of kisaeng. In addition, the topics expressed by men focused on Confucian morality and nature; kisaeng were more emotionally expressive. Part of the allure of a kisaeng was her existence as a kind of feminine anomaly within the male public sphere. These women were not purely to be admired as beautiful objects, but were educated, witty and expressive; intelligence was an important quality for a successful kisaeng. Because of this quality, kisaeng were social contradictions existing alongside men, and their personal power came from their successful balance of feminine beauty and masculine education. This role leads to the popularity of improvisational genres such as sijo amongst kisaeng and their patrons as the genre combines these ideals feminine refinement with male intelligence.

Kisaeng traditions have had an influence on the instruments associated with women presently, specifically the kayagüm. All kisaeng in public offices during the Chosŏn Dynasty were required to study the Chinese lute, called the pip’a (琵琶). The students were further required to study a primary instrument of their choosing; the most popular was the kayagüm, also a plucked stringed instrument. One advantage of performing on a stringed instrument was that the performer could easily sing along while playing, which can be seen with kayagüm pyŏngch’ang (伽倻琴竝唱) in the early twentieth century. Plucked strings may have been more popular originally because the kayagüm, pip’a, or the hammered yanggŭm could allow for a quieter and more refined vocal technique than the kŏmun’go, which employs the use of a bamboo stick to strike, pluck and strum the strings, or the ajaeng, which is bowed. Later, the ajaeng and especially the kŏmun’go became a popular choice for young kisaeng to study during the period of Japanese occupation as instrumental genres such as sanjo became increasingly

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21 Y.C. Kim, Women, 142.
22 Ibid., 140.
23 Ibid., 166.
24 B.Y. Lee, Women, 74-75.
25 Chang, Kugak Taeajon, 86.
popular with upper-class audiences. As sanjo is a solo instrumental work, the risk of overtaking the singer was no longer a consideration.

With the creation of sanjo in the late nineteenth century and the growing acceptance of female singers of p’ansori, these two genres became increasingly popular along with sijo in kisaeng performances into the twentieth century and through the Japanese occupation. All three of these genres are performed with one drum and one solo performer either on voice or instrument. While kisaeng would have been trained in the performance of the changgo and other percussion instruments, there is not much evidence of them performing the drum accompaniment for these genres; they were instead accompanied by male performers or by their male teachers. Sanjo originated with the kayagüm but was then later developed for other instruments such as the kómun’go, taegüm, tanso (短簫) and ajaeng. However, it seems that only the kayagüm sanjo was regularly performed by kisaeng, and kayagüm sanjo is the only instrument with versions developed by female performers.

The restrictions on kisaeng and the music they performed helped shape the current state of traditional music in Korea. Certain instruments were favored and associated with kisaeng, which led to the continued association of these instruments with women. The educational system of kisaeng, which resembled that of an upper-class gentlemen, also meant that kisaeng were established performers of many genres of traditional music. In addition, during the Japanese imperial rule of Korea, kisaeng were often the holders of traditional genres as the practice and popularity of traditional music changed through decline. However, certain genres and instruments still maintain a masculine association and were not often performed by kisaeng, specifically wind and percussion instruments or Confucian ritual music. The exploration of these issues can help to illuminate the current state of traditional music and its gendered associations that still exist.

Decline and Preservation of Traditional Music

In addition to these overall social issues influencing gender and musical society, a thick web of cultural layers has rapidly and drastically shaped the Korean Peninsula during the past century and a half. The Japanese imperial rule over Korea, beginning with a protectorate in 1905 and fully established by annexation in 1910, took traditional music away from the public forum of Korean culture. This is not to say that Korean traditional music was not performed at this time, but with the opening of Korea to Japan and, thus, the influences of Western music and culture, traditional music was increasingly seen by the upper classes as outdated, old-fashioned or, in the case of religion, superstitious and primitive. Traditional music and arts have been in decline since the introduction of Western music at the turn of the twentieth century.

Towards the end of the Chosón Dynasty, education and the pursuit of knowledge became increasingly emphasised through the idea that “knowledge is power” for the future. To achieve this goal, many schools were opened, including Western missionary

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27 Kungnip Minsok Pangmulgwan, Yŏpsŏ sok-ŭi kisaeng ilki (엽서 속의 기생 읽기) [Reading Kisaeng in Postcards]: Understanding of Gisaeng in Postcards (Seoul: Minsokwon, 2009), 43
29 Ibid., 16.
30 Yong-Shik Lee, Sanjo (Seoul: The National Center for Korean Traditional Performing Arts, 2009), 1.
31 Byeon, Writing New Music, 54.
schools and music schools. The introduction of Western music into the “hermit kingdom” became a great force for modernisation and social mobility, as Howard notes: “modernizers saw Korean court music as part of the disenfranchised royal household, and folk traditions as backward and outdated. They turned to Western practice”. As Western music became increasingly popular, many of the traditional genres fell out of favour due to their association with the previous dynasty while Christianity marginalised ritual music and folk genres associated with Confucian, Shamanic and Buddhist practices.

Modernisation further prompted the rise of the middle class and the development of bourgeois culture, as distinct from the traditional chungin class. In 1909, the first training in Western classical music became available at the Choyang Club, followed by the opening of the Western classical music department the next year at Ewha Haktang Taehakpu (now Ewha Woman’s University, 梨花女子大學校). In time, Western classical music became a sign of modernisation as Western classical musicians attained high social status and supported the cultural ideal of modernity and wealth; traditional musicians, in contrast, were considered very lowly, paid significantly less and often discouraged from pursuing traditional music by their family. During this process of decline in traditional music, the drive for modernity and social mobility meant that fewer men pursued careers in music and more underwent training in business, economics, engineering and science. Traditional music was increasingly being performed by women, such as all-female p’ungmul percussion bands and ch’anggŭk opera troupes.

During Japanese Imperial Rule, the culture prompted shifts in the association of traditional music toward kisaeng. While the Japanese occupation opened Korea to new musical interests, there was also some Japanese interest in Korean arts and music. Because of this, kisaeng became part of the Japanese system of geisha (芸者), and thus became entertainment for the new upper class of Japanese and other foreigners in Korea. The Japanese government required that kisaeng register and be monitored in the same way as prostitutes, with more high-ranking kisaeng being forced to participate in sex-work, causing the stigma of selling one’s body to appear among the higher ranking kisaeng. In addition, Japanese geisha did come to Korea and perform, sometimes alongside the Korean kisaeng, as can be seen from announcements of public performances.

32 Ibid., 54-60.
33 Howard, “Social and Regional”, 952.
34 Byeon, Writing New Music, 16-17.
36 Byeon, Writing New Music, 60.
in newspapers during the Japanese occupation.\textsuperscript{40} These kisaeng were trained in private schools called kwŏnbŏn (劵番) where the different classes of kisaeng mixed together and lost class distinction. Pilzer describes the roles of the schools:

> The private schools dispatched entertainers to drinking houses, restaurants, banquets, radio stations, recording companies and theaters so that female professional entertainers were involved in the development of two connected entertainment arenas: a public scene of mass media and theater performances and a private room culture geared toward entertaining colonial elites, which was centered in private homes, upscale restaurants and drinking houses. … In these various ways the gisaeng became some of the most powerful figures for disseminating the musical forms of the emergent public culture.\textsuperscript{41}

This association with traditional music and kisaeng led to links between women and traditional music; kisaeng schools became largely responsible for the continuation of many genres of traditional Korean music and dance.\textsuperscript{42} Lacking a popular audience, male musicians would often find work teaching traditional music at kisaeng schools, which influenced the gender roles in traditional music culture at present in Korea.\textsuperscript{43} While the majority of students in university-sponsored traditional music programmes are female, a large percentage of professors and lecturers, particularly in musicology or composition, remain male.

While there was some decline through the Japanese occupation, the greatest period of decline occurred in the years immediately following the Korean War.\textsuperscript{44} During this period of acute decline, women, who were not necessarily associated with kisaeng traditions, toured and performed in all-female p’ungmul (風物) and ch’anggŭk (唱劇) troupes. As these genres became less popular and more marginalised, women were more easily accepted as a novel type of performance. Not until the nationalist movement were male and female performers seen in mixed percussion groups at public demonstrations. In the 1960s there was a movement toward preservation and nationalism with the initiation of the state preservation system and the reinterpretation of traditional arts as part of “indigenous culture by nationalist students in South Korea and performed by dancers on urban stages”.\textsuperscript{45} In the 1970s and 1980s, there was an increasing movement towards nationalism and democratisation. This movement was marked by a renewed interest in traditional arts. On university campuses and throughout the countryside, there were gatherings in public madang (場), meaning “open square” or “meeting space”, consisting of mask dances, political p’ansori songs, and performance of p’ungmul drumming.

\textsuperscript{40} Yongūi Kim, Kaehwagi taejungyesur-ŭi kkot, kisaeng (개화기 대중예술의 꽃, 기생) [Flowers of the Popular Arts during Modernization, Kisaeng] (Seoul: Minsokwon, 2006), 73-75.
\textsuperscript{41} Pilzer, “The Twentieth-Century”, 298.
\textsuperscript{42} K.H. Kim, “P’ansori”, 14-15; S.H. Park, “Patronage”, 258. This is not to say that kisaeng only studied Korean music and dance. The students were also educated in the performance of certain genres of Japanese singing and dancing as well as in some Western genres. For example, Yŏpsŏ sok-ŭi kisaeng ilki (엽서 속의 기생 읽기) [Reading Kisaeng in Postcards], depicts kisaeng in Western dress, playing guitar and studying Japanese instruments such as the koto (Kungnip, Yŏpsŏ, 65, 81-89).
\textsuperscript{43} Kungnip, Yŏpsŏ, 41.
\textsuperscript{44} Sa-hun Chang, Han guk ūmaksu yŏnp’yo (韓國音樂史年表) [A Timeline of Korean History] (Chongju: Chŏngju Taehakkyo Ch’ulp’inbu, 1990), 615; Keith Howard, Preserving Korean Music: Intangible Cultural Properties as Icons of Identity (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 1.
During school vacations students would travel to the countryside to partake in agricultural work and learn *p'ungmul*. The performance of shamanic drumming became the representation of the *Minjung* (民衆, “people” or “masses”) culture and unified the Korean masses of underprivileged and nameless people.

Interestingly, in this quest for national identity, intellectuals turned to Korean shamanism as a spiritual source of nationalist ideology and to shamanistic rituals as a means of raising critical consciousness and comradeship among the participants of the social movement. In this way, history has been re-appropriated, and shamanism is now used to mobilize the spirit of the oppressed.

In this period there was an increase in the number of female musicians participating in *p'ungmul* in mixed-gender groups. Within the communal setting, all members of the audience were encouraged to participate. Gatherings were often led and coached by student activists who would workshop local members, such as factory workers, illiterate farmers and fishermen; local creation of plays and music based on current political issues was encouraged.

Nationalism unified around the oppressed folk culture as an expression of national identity. Women, as doubly oppressed due to the patriarchal nature of society, have a stronger claim to suffering, or *han* (恨). While identification with the suffering of the oppressed is part of the nationalist movement, male members of society are typically at the head of the movement with female members of society representing the feminine, nurturing “motherland”. Men represent modernity and forward movement while embodying revolution and discontinuity; women, on the other hand, represent the authentic body of national tradition, inertia, nature and continuity. Men are responsible for change and the future; women are responsible for preservation and the past. Implicit in this role of women and preservation is the distrust of women breaking norms of society. The role of women in cultural preservation within Korea has been influenced by this distrust of women that collaborate with the occupying force, both Japanese and, later, American. Therefore, women that participate in the preservation of traditional culture can be seen as an action against the outside forces of occupation, colonisation and globalisation.

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46 Ibid., 938.
50 Ibid., 167.
51 Chungmoo Choi, “Nationalism and Construction of Gender in Korea”, in Dangerous Woman: Gender and Korean Nationalism, edited by Elaine H. Kim and Chungmoo Choi (New York and London: Routledge, 1998), 14. Werner Sasse defines *han* roughly as “grudge (grievance, regret, resentment, spite, rancour or unsatisfied desire)” starting as “indignation, righteous indignation, or the feeling of unresolved resentment against unjustifiable suffering of an individual”; with time, *han* “began to be seen as the collective feeling of every Korean evoked through a history of suppression by outside forces and the continuing strong foreign influence supported by the political rulers” (Sasse, “Minjung”, 30-33).
The nationalist movement and the adaptation of traditional genres for the expression of national identity show the acceptance of women as collaborators in traditional music; however, the next phase calling for the preservation of traditional music speaks to the current state where the majority of traditional musicians are female. The Cultural Properties Legislation introduced in 1962 mirrored the earlier Japanese system of protection for cultural properties in many ways, including the division of categories and the process of preservation. In addition to preservation, the Korean Cultural Properties Legislation aimed to “contrive the cultural progress of the people and to contribute to the development of human culture” in order to strengthen Korean cultural identity in the aftermath of Japanese rule, the Korean War and modernisation.  

Significant to the Korean system is that, unlike Japan, Korea decided to include folk music and art into the preservation system from the beginning, thus saying that folk music and musicians were equal in status to aristocratic music and musicians. Implicit to this process is the levelling of the statuses of male and female musicians. Rather than being subject to popular taste or preference, the system attempted to find an “authentic” tradition and to preserve its performance in a fixed form.

As many of the traditional genres were studied in kisaeng kwŏnbŏn, schools for the training of kisaeng, during Japanese rule, several of the appointed carriers of Intangible Cultural Properties (大韓民國 重要無形文化財, taehannin’guk chungyomuhongmunhwajae) were women, for example within kayagûm sanjo, the aristocratic vocal genres (kagok, kasa and sijo) and p’ansori. These carriers were given a government stipend for financial support, gained recognition as respected authorities and were required to teach students, one of whom had to be a “master student” or chŏnsusaeng (傳受生). Traditionally, Kisaeng were not respected members of Confucian society and being associated with kisaeng was highly stigmatised. The objectification of kisaeng separated these female musicians from the male professional musicians. Being appointed a carrier of an Intangible Cultural Property gave status and legitimisation to these female musicians who were formerly associated with kisaeng kwŏnbŏn. Many of these women distanced themselves from kisaeng training and did not associate themselves with their period of study. This distancing from the kisaeng tradition, while not an immediate change, over time gave women greater respect as members of the musical community.

The focus of preservation was on the replication of performance rather than on creative practices, performance spaces, or the process of transmission. With a shift in traditional settings towards Western-style concert hall settings, the relationship between audience and performance object might have created a space that was more accepting of female musicians. Unlike traditional village gatherings, folk music is now performed in the same institutional settings as aristocratic music, where the performer was removed from the happenings of the event by being presented on a stage separate from the viewing space of the audience. There is a formalisation of the performance setting where the audience is required to sit in silence and act as an observer rather than take part in the performance in an interactive and informal way. The relationship between audience and... 

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54 Howard, Preserving, 228.
55 Ibid., 69.
56 Ibid., 9.
57 Ibid., 70. The kayagûm player Park Kyungso told me that as a student, her teacher told her to keep her body upright and still during performance so as not to look like a kisaeng (Park Kyungso, interview, September 7, 2009).
58 Performances of kugak in the concert hall of the National Gugak Center, the house lights are kept up, which weakens the divide between performer and audience.
performer is altered through the removal of the performer from the space of the audience by placing the performer on a separate, secluded, stage-lit space. This objectification of the performer might more closely reflect the traditional relationship of kisaeng or lower-class musicians within an aristocratic space in service of the elite audience thus aiding in the acceptance of women in the performance of traditional music.

Conclusion

This paper deals with two main issues, both of which have implications in the shift from male-dominated to female-dominated traditional music culture. The first issue is the removal of traditional music from the popular culture; the second is the process of preservation that followed. Through the events of the twentieth century, the role of musician as male shifted to the present state where most students and performers of traditional and Western music are female while men tend to pursue studies and careers in economics, engineering and the sciences. There are a large number of influences to discuss regarding this shift, but they can all be considered under the broad umbrella of modernisation. The opening of Korea to Western music and culture in the late nineteenth century with the abolition of the class system led to the diminishing popularity of traditional music. The traditionally negative perception of musicians and kisaeng as the lowest members of traditional Confucian society, combined with the growing association of traditional music with superstition and old-fashioned practices and the social mobility allowed with modernisation, discouraged the pursuit of traditional arts. On a large scale, this marginalisation of traditional music moved the role of musician from the public sphere to the private sphere, thus allowing the acceptance of women in traditional arts as marginalised members of society. Strengthening the association between women and traditional music was the running of kwŏnbŏn to train kisaeng in both traditional and Western musical forms.

Throughout patriarchal societies, the process of modernisation, industrialisation, and colonial rule leads to the division between men as innovators and women as preservers. This role as cultural preserver is complex and influenced by many societal factors; however, the basis of this division is the patriarchal separation of gender roles where “initially, men specialised in work in the market, earning wages to support the family, while women specialised in work in the home, becoming economically dependent with primary responsibility for child rearing”. Thus, within traditional Korean culture, men were in charge of the public sphere (innovation and modernity) and women of the private sphere (preservation and tradition). Globally, there is a common contemporary stereotype that classifies women as communal and intuitive and men as instrumental and

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60 These include the opening of the ports and the abolition of the class system in the late nineteenth century, Japanese occupation, nationalism, the Korean War, industrialisation, social mobility, democratisation, and preservation.
61 The class system was officially abolished in the 1890s; however, the social practice continues to influence social perceptions and cultural associations.
62 See Hyŏngyu Sin, Kisaenggiyagi: ilhesidae taejungsŭ'a (기생이야기: 일제시대의 대중스타) [The Story of Kisaeng: The Popular Stars during the Japanese Occupation] (Seoul: Sarram Ch’ulpansa, 2007); Yŏngŭi Kim, Kaehwagi. Kisaeng were not trained in all traditional musical genres, but rather learned genres enjoyed by upper class audiences and kisaeng tourists such as pansori, sanjo, kagyum pyŏngch’ung, minyo, and the aristocratic vocal genres.
63 Margaret Mooney Marini, “Sex and Gender: What Do We Know?,” Sociological Forum 5 (1990), 97.
competitive, thus reflecting the division in social roles.\textsuperscript{64} Shehan speaks of this divide in Balkan society where women are more concerned with continuity and sustaining while men are concerned with economic gain and progress.\textsuperscript{65} In diaspora women are often more restricted as “keepers of tradition” while immigrant males are afforded more opportunities outside of the home.\textsuperscript{66} Similarly, within rapidly modernising societies, men often work towards progress while women are keepers of culture.\textsuperscript{67} While deeply influenced by the events of the past century, it is this role of woman as the preserver of the purity of customs that is the initial cultural association with the role of women in the current system of preservation.

\textsuperscript{64} Marini, “Sex and Gender:” 98; Cecilia L. Ridgeway and Shelley J. Correll, “Unpacking the Gender System: A Theoretical Perspective on Gender Beliefs and Social Relations,” \textit{Gender and Society} 18:4 (2004), 513.
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