

**BEYOND THE COMFORT ZONE:
FEMALE GUGAK MUSICIANS RESPONDING TO 21ST CENTURY KOREA**

A Thesis

by

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ABSTRACT

While individuals in the *gugak* (Korean traditional music) scene have been predominantly females, traditional gendered barriers still persist, limiting women's musical practices. Through historical and ethnographical analysis, I emphasize individual and collective endeavors of female *gugak* performers to claim their own voice in contemporary Korean society and explore how their identities have continuously challenged, negotiated, and transformed through those endeavors. Despite traditional gender normativity that has been long established and reinforced by ruling ideologies and power relations, these female *gugak* performers have blurred such boundaries employing *gugak* as a powerful means of creating new spaces. Women's *gugak*, therefore, serves as a form of autonomy and resistance that further empowers female body and strengthen its agency. As it reconstructs power dynamics, their musical practice further reveals *gugak*'s new possibility in contemporary society.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

On April 24, 2014, an image of a female performer singing to a Korean traditional instrument surrounded by dozens of male police officers was widely distributed through online media. The woman was performing to protest how the South Korean government handled the ferry sinking. The Sewol ferry disaster has remained as the most painful subject in South Korea since April 16, 2014. The whole nation was traumatized as it watched a ferry packed with high school students sinking on live TV throughout the entire day. Resulting in over 300 deaths, the trauma further compounded a collective shame and rage over charges of negligence and incompetence by the ship's crew and the Korean government. Thousands of protesters, dressed in yellow, gathered in central Seoul and violently clashed with the police as they marched on the presidential Blue House. As details of the government's botched handling of the tragedy were revealed, a major backlash against the Park Administration resulted in social and political upheavals. Demanding justice and truth, the sinking has sparked a series of anti-government protests across the nation. Linked with other social issues, the protest soon developed into a political rally.

The protest of this female performer, however, exhibited disparate images from other protests and generated distinctive responses from the public. In addition, a number of musicians who were forced to cancel their scheduled performances after the sinking followed her protest, forming collective movements. Watching her performances and public responses, I became aware of how South Koreans perceive music, *gugak* (Korean

traditional music), specifically, and how female body has been viewed in socio-political context. Contrasting images of the female body surrounded by male forces and performing a traditional instrument in the heart of a contemporary city further encouraged me to examine frequently overlooked issues in the *gugak* scene: the reception of female performers in male-dominated environments; *gugak*'s role in contemporary South Korea; and its influence in shaping female identity

Despite the majority number of female musicians, the *gugak* scene still largely remains as a male-dominated arena. Most of my interviewees also commented they have experienced gender barriers in instruments, genres, professions, performing spaces, and even costumes. Yet, there have been noticeable female performers who have been blurring such boundaries and transforming female identity in the *gugak* scene. While *gugak* has been isolated from the public and considered as unsuitable for contemporary South Korea, these women have created music in a “female language” with their “own voice” that reflects the social and political changes they have experienced. In addition, using their autonomous voice resulted in empowering female body, strengthening agency, and shifting power dynamics. Eventually to them, *gugak* has become a means of empowerment that challenges or reconstructs dominant gender norms.

By focusing on these female musicians, I aim to explore the discourse of gender, power, and ideologies in the *gugak* scene. What are the traditional gender norms and how have they emerged? What processes have led to the shift from practicing traditional gender norms to transforming or rejecting them? How has this change influenced the *gugak* scene? Most importantly, how have these performers been identifying and

negotiating their identities, and how have they been re-creating, re-forming and re-presenting gender identity? Building on what I investigate about the socio-political context of *gugak* and female performers in the *gugak* scene, I will suggest that *gugak*, for these female performers, is neither a mere reflection of past or present nor an embodiment of the dominant. Rather, *gugak* contributes to dismantling boundaries in gendered music and reinforcing females' role in *gugak* of contemporary South Korea.

Theoretical Frameworks

Power is everywhere and all art is political: my research started from this assumption. *Gugak*, a common term for traditional Korean music, is already politicized as it literally means “national music.” Throughout the Korean history, *gugak* has largely been associated with the dominant power as a political and ideological tool that legitimizes and reinforces hegemonic power relations. In this light, I believe that musical practices of *gugak* should be understood in terms of social and political context.

Foucault's (1977) theory of power relationships guided me to examine *gugak* and female body in relation to institutionalized power. By using his approach to power relations, in Chapter, I will analysis how *gugak* and female body in the *gugak* scene has become “docile bodies” throughout its history.

Barthes' (1977) emphasis on language, “the world of signifieds is none other than that of language,” (10) suggests the power of language, that is, language as power. By connecting the idea of power and language, I will also highlight the significance of

having language or voice for female performers in musicking processes.¹ Indeed, many feminists have perceived language as a means of empowerment. In Chapter Three, I will apply the French feminists Cixous (1976) and Irigaray's (1985) idea of "*l'écriture féminine*" or "feminine language," to the works of female musicians based on an assumption of music as language.² Yung-Hee Kim (2002) describes these pioneering women in relation to women's identity and autonomy, "creating new paradigms of womanhood in modern Korea" (44). I employ the idea of "new women" to analyze power dynamics between male and female, as well as tradition and modernity, in relation to "new musicians." Although labeling a group as "new" may arouse negative implication (i.e. old) to its counterpart, I clarify that it is not my intention to draw such distinction.

"Women in music" or "women's music" has become a more visible field in musicology and ethnomusicology since the late 1970s. Gender studies in music have focused on discrimination, exclusion, and specialness (Nettle 2005). In particular, Koskoff's (1989) essays provide more interpretive insight into women's musical participation and gendered expressions. In *Women and Music* (Pendle 2001), the trajectory of women in music is described chronologically since ancient Greece and Rome. In addition to this, Moisala and Diamond (2000) cover performance and

¹ The term, musicking, for Small (1998), covers all activities of musical practice, including performing, listening, rehearsing, practicing, providing material for performance, and dancing.

² Feld and Fox's (1994) review complexity and subtleness of the relationship between music and language: music and language, music as language, music in language, and language about music. In this thesis, I follow an ethnomusicologists' view on "music as language," "a key representational trope for social position and power" (26).

performativity, gendered musical places, and collective narratives in *Music and Gender*. While these scholarly works cover women's presence, role, and activities in music, most of them are limited to the Western society.

Meanwhile, feminist musicologist McClary's *Feminine Endings* (1991) not only provides ideas of gender and sexuality from Beethoven to Madonna, but also a chance to perceive these issues in a broad context. She underscores the sexual-political meaning of music in relation to shaping of individual identities, emotions, desires, and even bodies (McClary 1991). Moreover, she discusses gendered aspects of composers in terms of "mind (male) / body (female) split" and argues "music is always in danger of being perceived as feminine (or effeminate)" (McClary 1991, 151-152). This gendered role in music has resulted in *gugak* as well, largely in performing genres and performance spaces: what women can or can't do. Although her work is still situated in the Western context, her insight has influenced me to think more critically about gendered subjects in *gugak* scene.

For a proper investigation of "gender" in the context of the *gugak* scene and the traditional norms of Korea, it is necessary to understand what gender is. From a critical feminist perspective, the term gender has intertwined with social practices. Eckert (1989) points out the complexities between gender and power relations. According to Butler (1993), gender is socially constructed. More specifically, gender is "the dichotomized social production and reproduction of male and female identities and behaviors" (Sedgwick 1990, 25). Through repetitions of acts and performances, gender is produced and reproduced. In *Gender Trouble* (1990), Butler further emphasizes on gender

performance, or “gender performativity”: gender is rather doing or acting, than being. Similar to Hall’s (1990) notion of identity, gender is a production always in process, always in context. In *Gender Ironies of Nationalism* (2012), Mayer provides in-depth analysis on gender and national identity. He links gender and sexuality to the notion of nation in selective manners, emphasizing how sexuality and gender play a key role to build and sustain national identity.

In this thesis, gender performativity of musicians will be examined in a socio-political context. However, gender-related terms in this study—female, male, men, women, femininity, and masculinity—indicate both inherited and socially constructed concepts. This further reflects heterosexual norms and gendered concepts, which are often used exclusively for women and deeply rooted in Korean society. Although the terms, whether “female” or “women,” frequently appear throughout this thesis, it is not my intention to denigrate their meanings to gendered words.

To answer how has traditional gender normativity been established in Korea, I will first examine female body in Korean historical context. Notwithstanding the fact that female performers hold a majority number in today’s *gugak* circle, only minimal attention has been given to their presence in traditional Korean music. In terms of female body, there has been even less or limited works on *gisaeng*, traditional Korean female entertainers. Though *gisaeng* no longer exists in Korea, the sexualized images of *gisaeng* are still associated, mostly in a negative way, with female musicians today. Therefore, understanding *gisaeng*’s socio-political role is significant to my research.

Unlike past studies that perceived *gisaeng* just as a sexualized symbol, recent studies have illuminated their musical activities (Kim 1998; Son 1998; Song 2001, 2008; Lee J 2003; Zhang 2004; Jung 2007) and tried to reconsider their socio-political value, as well as to correct a biased view constructed under the Japanese colonial rule (Hwang 2011; Jung 2007; Kwon 2001, 2002, 2003, 2009, 2012, 2014; Lee J 2003; No 1995; Suh 2005a, 2005b, 2006, 2009, 2010). Kwon (2001, 2003, 2009, 2012, 2014) and Suh (2005a, 2005b, 2006, 2009, 2010) particularly underscore *gisaeng*'s socio-cultural roles and contributions in creating, promoting, preserving and supporting *gugak*. Moreover, Hwang (2011) focuses on the social activities of *gisaeng* that “represent the resistance against the colonial capitalism and joining the current social issues” (158). These recent studies on *gisaeng* have unveiled the under-represented aspects of the female body in the *gugak* scene that are distinctive from commonly held stereotypes of *gisaeng* as sexualized, marginalized, and subordinated beings; *gisaeng* rather actively engaged in social issues and resisted against oppressions by politicizing *gugak*.

Fusion *gugak*, with very few exceptions, according to Sutton (2011), “combines elements conceived to be ‘Korean’ with others that are (or may be) conceived to be ‘not Korean’” (2011, 4). Along with the growing popularity of fusion *gugak* since 1990s, recent studies have been dominated by discussions on authentic and aesthetic qualities of fusion *gugak* (Kim 2001; Lee S 2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2005a, 2005b; Jeon 2008a, 2008b; Howard 2006, 2011; Sutton 2008; Um 2008; Yun 2004). While these have together generated meaningful debates, little attention has been drawn to the agency of young female musicians. In addition, while few have recognized cultural and ideological issues

in fusion *gugak*, gender issues have not been adequately addressed. Howard, in his article, briefly problematizes sexualized aspect of fusion *gugak*, “too much of *kugak* fusion is about being pretty and sexy... It is closer to pop than *kugak*” (Howard 2011, 211). Finchum-Sung (2009) and Yeo (2013) also mention this in a manner similar to Howard’s when they describe female group YIEN’s performance.³

These comments suggest that there have been “gendered subjects” in the *gugak* scene. Yet, only few studies have looked at “gender” or “gendered subject” in *gugak*. In regards to gendered subjects, Mueller (2013) points out gendered genres and instruments in the *gugak* scene and illustrates long-existed gender norms in particular genres. In addition, Choi (2015) reports gendered practices of Korean drumming and how female drummers engage with masculinity to survive in the male-dominated genre. Following Jeon’s (2008a) explanation, these are ill-conceived ideologies of the past that have justified the dominants’ oppression on the marginalized. To demonstrate how female fusion *gugak* performers represent their sexuality and exercise female agency in musical activities, Kim (2012) particularly analyzed the musical practices of three female groups. Aforementioned works are valuable materials for me to develop the in-depth research on gender and *gugak*. Unfortunately, there has been no research solely focusing on female musicians who refused traditional gender norms. Therefore, my intention is to fill the

³ Finchum-Sung describes YIEN’s performance as “the sexy, youthful performers combine their expertise in traditional performance with electronically-produced sounds and dance rhythms” (Finchum-Sung 2008, 446). In addition, Yeo briefly mentions one of their performances under the theme of *gisaeng* and describes how they have reached the current group style “without being overtly sexy or feminine in performance” (Yeo 2013, 41).

literature gap by examining how prominent female musicians of today establish, represent, negotiate, and empower their identities through *gugak*.

Methodology

This thesis is primarily an observational case study on gender issues in the contemporary *gugak* scene. In order to analyze young female *gugak* musicians' performativity in relation to gender, power, and ideologies, I mainly applied two different methods: historiography and ethnography.

My archival research practice, in this project, incorporates primary and secondary sources, including historical materials and mass media articles. To follow the trajectory of gender normativity construction in a chronological manner, I consulted five institutional archives in Seoul: the National Gugak Center, the Namsan Gugakdang, the National Assembly Library of Korea, the National Library of Korea, and the Music Library of Ewha Womans' University. I was especially privileged to have an access to certain materials: the National Gugak Center and the Namsan Gugakdang have been by far the most helpful in terms of documented records and prints.

I conducted fieldwork in Seoul, South Korea during the summer of 2015. The fieldwork in Seoul included interviews and participant-observation to performances. In terms of selecting the interviewees, what I primarily considered was: gender (female soloists or teams); role in music-making process (composer, writer, or singer-songwriter); musical practices (politicized and gendered); musical style (contemporary); musical contents; musical aesthetic; and popularity. After selecting potential interviewees, I

collected their information, largely from the online resources, including their musical activities, interviews, and the public response.

Using D. Soyini Madison (2012) and Sharan B. Merriam's (2016) books on ethnographic research as references, my interviews included a range of questions including their personal experiences, opinions, knowledge, and backgrounds. We further discussed their motivation for creating music, the obstacles and accomplishments they had throughout the process, gender issues, and their opinion on both *gugak* and fusion *gugak* discourses. Most importantly, I focused on meanings behind of their own labeling or dis-labeling of themselves. Throughout the interviews, I explored how each group's aesthetics, concerns, and circumstances are reflected in their music. While most of interviews were under their real names, I have used initials for some interviewees when they mentioned about sensitive subjects.

During my fieldwork, I also attended interviewee's performances. When I was not able to actually be present at the concerts due to personal issues, I asked the performers or the organizers to videotape the entire performance. Most importantly, watching the performance titled "Sisters' Gugak" was particularly important to my research since it was a pop-up performance exclusively featuring prominent young female performers. In addition to my fieldwork in Seoul, I also attended [SU:M]'s performance in Spring 2015 in Austin, Texas, to observe their music in a different cultural context. Apart from the actual concerts, I also investigated their music through their released albums and videos. Each served as an important source for understanding what they seek to express and convey to others through their music. The musical

analysis based on lyrics and form of music, and composition. The other components of the performance such as appearance (attires and make-up), stage properties, and choreography (or dance) were analyzed as well.

It should be noted that I have similar background to these musicians. I received extensive musical training as a young female *gugak* musician from middle school, through high school, to university, which is almost identical to that of my interviewees. Almost every interviewee, with the exception of two, was my senior either from the same middle school, high school, or university. For this reason, I treated them with respect and courtesy, even though we were of similar ages. Furthermore, my personal relationships with these performers and experience from the *gugak* scene helped me to develop a deeper understanding of their status as female *gugak* performers in contemporary Korea.

Building on my field and archival research, I will analyze how female *gugak* performers practice their music and shape their identity by interacting with the traditional gender norms of the *gugak* scene. My analysis will start by tracing the socio-cultural history of *gugak* in general and female *gugak* performers in specific terms. Then, I will explore gender issues in contemporary *gugak* by reviewing relevant academic discourses and ethnographic information obtained from my fieldwork. I hope this thesis makes a meaningful contribution to the field of ethnomusicology by shedding light on the under-explored topic of gender issues in the contemporary *gugak* scene and stimulating further research on the topic.

CHAPTER II

GENDERED *GUGAK*:

UNDERSTANDING FEMALE BODY IN POLITICAL CONTEXT

Gugak is a direct translation of “national music,” which has been practiced, promoted, and preserved largely under Korean ideology, hegemony, and government policy. Female participation, or their role in *gugak*, thus, has been closely associated with “power relations” in Korean society. In this chapter, I explore the history of *gugak* from the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910) to present day, in regards to how female body has been perceived in the *gugak* scene and how the traditional gender norms have been established within *gugak*. Archival research, based on historical materials found at institutions and articles from mass media, is utilized as a means to understand each era.

Although the musical tradition of *gugak* dates back to as early as 57 B.C., my focus is on the major shifts in *gugak* since the Joseon Dynasty. The current form of *gugak*, including its instrumentation and repertoire, was officially established in the Joseon Dynasty and has been transmitted to the present since then. Based on the major political power relations and events that have influenced practices of *gugak* in South Korea, I primarily focus on periods of: (1) the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910); (2) Japanese colonial rule (1910-1945); (3) military regimes (1963-1988); and (4) the democratic governments (1993-present). By looking at how government policy, music education, and society in general changed in these periods, I trace how the *gugak* scene has evolved and how the role and the musical practices of female *gugak* musicians have been established in each period.

The Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910): Neo-Confucianism

Neo-Confucian ideology mostly governed the Joseon Dynasty. The Neo-Confucianists in the early Joseon era strove to reform the society based on Neo-Confucianism. They claimed that the Goryeo Dynasty, which preceded the Joseon Dynasty, collapsed from two major factors: “depraved” Buddhism and “self-indulgent” women of the late Goryeo era.⁴ This notion led to *eokbulsungyu* (meaning suppressing Buddhism and revering Neo-Confucianism) policy and the imposition of strict social and moral controls on women (Koh 1971).

Neo-Confucianism viewed the world in terms of a metaphysical relationship between the cosmic and the social order (Koh 2003). Since the Joseon Dynasty had a rigid hierarchical social structure, one’s status was predestined by their parents’ social class. Such social hierarchy was active in between four social classes: *yangban* (the elite or the literati), *jung-in* (simply means “middle people” in between *yangban* and *yang-in*), *yang-in* or *pyeongmin* (literally means “normal people,” including farmers, fishermen, and merchants), and *cheonmin* (the lowest, including slaves, butchers, servants, shamans, and professional entertainers).

According to patriarchal ideology, there were fundamental differences between men and women both in physical and social aspects: just as *yang* (heaven) should dominate the *eum* (earth) and *gun* (rulers) should govern *shin* (retainers), men were seen superior to women. This order could never be overturned since it was not just socially constructed, but also thought to be naturally inherited one. Women during the Joseon era

⁴ Women in Goryeo and Early Joseon period relatively had more “freedom” (Koh 1971).

were subservient to men throughout their life: to fathers when young, to husbands when married, and to the oldest son when widowed (Lee 2005).⁵ It was an inevitable consequence that women's social status changed as they married to men from different classes. Oppressions of women become even more permanent as *Gyeonggukdaejeon*, a complete code of law in the 15th century, even prohibited women's remarriage and restricted their outing (Deuchler 1992).

The traditional gender roles of dominant men and submissive women appeared both in the domestic- and the public- sphere and were solidified by Neo-Confucianism. Women's access to the public sphere was very limited, and their power and responsibility was limited to the domestic issues to fulfill the Confucian ideal of feminine virtue: "loyal wife" and "good mother." This ideal role of women, or "femininity," was deeply rooted in the Neo-Confucianism system and even demanded "women's consent."

As masculine desire "requires in its object...an identification with the feminine position...women *must either* consent *or* be seduced into consenting to femininity" (De Lauretis 1984, 134). Most women, therefore, willingly celebrated this ideal image of femininity or womanly behavior embedded in the virtues of perseverance, chastity, purity, and honor. Yarbrow-Bejarano points out:

This means effectively accepting their exclusion from the subject position,
welcoming their condition as Other defined in terms of the Same. Honor

⁵ This notion was based on the principle of "three submissions" or *Samjongjido* (See Han, Kim, and Tyson 2010; Lee E 2005; and Rhee 1997). Thus, women's social, economic, and political condition was largely controlled and limited by men's.

plays that gravitate towards the euphoric pole reconfirm man's faith in womanly virtue, as he himself has interpreted it. Her virtues and strategies of resistance add up to self-negation; the more ab-negated and abject, the more virtuous she is. (Yarbro-Bejarano 1994, 79)

The rigid Neo-Confucian ideology, including the class and gender separations, was also present in music performed during Joseon era in various ways: genres, instruments, performing spaces and their settings, playing techniques, attires, and props were gendered or class-based. For instance, ritual practices—whether they were associated with Confucianism, Buddhism, or Shamanism—were class-oriented, reflecting and reinforcing the social hierarchy and class stereotypes. The rational men and emotional women stereotype was well-projected as well; only men could participate both as performers or audiences in Confucian rituals (that were deemed more logical in nature), while it was mostly female shamans who practiced shamanic rituals (that were seen more emotional) (Mueller 2013).

Jeong-ak, which refers to court or *pungnyu* (aristocratic) music,⁶ was mostly performed and appreciated by men from higher classes, the dominants.⁷ While professional entertainers in the folk music scenes—such as *gwangdae*, *mudang* (shaman),

⁶ *Pungnyu* literally means “wind and flow” in Korean. *Pungnyu* music was enjoyed and adored among the literati and the members of high society during the Joseon dynasty. The literati during the Joseon dynasty learned music and performed privately only for themselves to achieve peaceful mind and purified lifestyle. Genres of *pungnyu* music include string ensembles, vocal genres, an instrumental solo, and a duet.

⁷ Female musicians would perform music on a smaller scale for the women of the court. Sometimes, they were accompanied by male performers 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 (Jang 1986, 256-257).

and *gisaeng* (female entertainers)—belonged to *cheonmin*, professional court music performers were affiliated to the Jangakwon, the official court music institution of the Joseon Dynasty. Although both men and women were present in the court music scene, only men were allowed to play instruments or to sing. Since the court music was strictly organized to reflect the Neo-Confucian ideology, performers were not allowed to “express” their own emotions.

Female performers, however, faced even greater restrictions as they could only perform choreographed movements with their hands covered with *hansam* (excessively long sleeves) to hide their skin.⁸ In terms of “expression,” *pungnyu* music seemingly allowed greater space for women. However, female participation in *pungnyu* music was limited to *gisaeng*, female entertainers belong to the lowest class. These *gisaeng* women were unique since they “already existed outside of the social norms of respectable Confucian womanhood” (Mueller 2013, 15). This aristocratic *pungnyu* music was mainly to exercise self-discipline among the elites, and *gisaeng* merely existed to “serve” the elite audience and remained as objectified female performers.

Gisaeng played significant roles not only in Korean music, but also in Korean history. These female entertainers could often transcend gender- and class- barriers. Their low social status granted them greater freedom not permitted to noble women of Joseon. On the hand, because of their unique profession, *gisaeng* could wear luxurious outfits of certain colors, fabrics, and jewelries, not permitted to low-class women. In

⁸ Long sleeves are often used to accentuate elegance dance movements, but *hansam* was mostly to conceal the hands of *gisaeng* dancers when they were performing court dance.

addition, they received extensive training like aristocrat men and participated in economic activities like ordinary men. Even though *gisaeng* largely remained as an “objectified” being in male gaze, they were more than a mere symbol of traditional femininity. Their professional abilities as artists were highly valued, and successful or talented *gisaeng* had strong influence on music, dance, painting, and literature (Kwon 2009, 2012; Lee 1981; Mueller 2013).

The gendered musical practices from the Neo-Confucian Joseon society have continued to today. Court and ritual music that were practiced only by male musicians are still regarded as more “authentic” or “proper” than other genres (Jeon 2008a). *Jeong-ak*, which is literally “proper music” with noble and elegance image, has maintained its “tradition” allowing the least change. *Jongmyo Jeryeak*, the most representative ritual music, has been particularly well preserved under Korean government’s special protection. Ever since its designation as the Important Intangible Cultural Property No.1 of South Korea, it has been performed annually in governmental ceremonies. Ironically, although women usually constitute the majority of the performing ensembles, women musicians and dancers are still required to perform in male costumes (Figure 1.1) to provide the “authentic male” image of the genre.



Figure 1.1. Female dancers dressed in male costumes in *Jongmyo Jeryeak* performance. Courtesy of the National Gugak Center, Seoul, Korea. <http://www.gugak.go.kr>. (accessed May 16, 2016)

Musical practices have created the image of gendered instruments as well. For instance, wind and percussion instruments have usually been performed by male musicians. One major reason for this is larger emphasis on wind and percussion instruments in court and ritual music (Mueller 2013). Some *gugak* performers, regardless their gender, still claim that it is due to physical difference between men and women: hand size and lung capability. On the occasions of female-only rituals, the court of the Joseon Dynasty employed blind male musicians, since female performers were considered incapable of mastering such wind instruments (Lee 1981).⁹ Similar notions of the “incapable” female body are also found in Western music culture as well (Cantú and Nájera-Ramírez 2002; Macleod 2000). While many female *gugak* performers have

⁹ Since Neo-Confucian ideology strongly emphasized separating males and females, it was customary to make an event exclusively for a particular gender, especially in noble events. Hence, blind males were often employed as expedients on occasions where males needed to be secluded from females.

proven such physical differences insignificant, this notion of masculine instruments still persists in so-called, authentic, traditional, or proper genres of *gugak*.

String instruments such as *gayageum*, are predominantly performed by women. *Gayageum* was the most favored instrument by *gisaeng*, partially because the instrument was seen “feminine.”¹⁰ On the other hand, *geomungo* was considered to be more masculine counterpart of *gayageum* and is still referred as “the instrument of *seonbi* (the literati).”¹¹ Although there is no longer *seonbi* or such a male-dominated “class system” in today’s society, subtle and seemingly non-visible power relations are still around.

Japanese Colonial Rule (1910-1945): Colonial Modernity

In the early 20th century, Korea, then still Joseon, went through massive upheavals in its political, economic, social, and cultural system. Under the Japanese colonial rule (1910-1945), Korean society was forced to engage with “colonial modernity.” Colonial modernity, according to Loomba, is “the conquest and control of other people’s land and goods,” as “*un-forming* or *re-forming* the communities that existed there already, and involved a wide range of practices including trade, settlement, plunder, negotiation, warfare, genocide, and enslavement” (Loomba 2015, 20). During

¹⁰ This notion holds several negative connotations. This will be further explained in relation to the influence of the Japanese colonialism rule (1910-1945).

¹¹ Even today, where *seonbi* no longer exists, *geomungo* is often associated with the image of *seonbi*. According to an educational video clip posted on the website of the National Gugak Center, *geomungo* is still described as a “*seonbi*’s instrument” and playing *geomungo* is regarded as cultivating *seonbi*’s virtues (see the National Gugak Center’s official website). Many have found the reason in the range of pitches as *geomungo* in low and *gayageum* in high. However, this does little to truly explain since there has been no such division among wind instruments. For instance, *piri* has low pitches while *daegeum* has a relatively high range.

this period, the most powerful instrument of social change was the colonial bureaucracy, which implemented the following three-step strategy: military suppression (1910-19), cultural rule (1919-37), and national assimilation (1937-45).

Korean *minsok* (folklore) culture commonly refers to traditional culture from the Joseon Dynasty. Joo, Nam, and Im (2009) pointed out that the most of currently called “authentic tradition” or “indigenous folklore” was ‘Joseon *minsok*’ that was selectively reformed, reproduced, and categorized by the Japanese Governor-General. *Gisaeng*’s negative image today, as prostitutes rather than professional entertainers, was also constructed under the Japanese colonialism (Kwon 2001, 2009, 2014; Lee J 2003). While there have been several studies on the status of *gisaeng* in this period, their social and political role has received relatively less attention (Suh 2005a, 2005b, 2009). To elite males in colonized Korea, *gisaeng* was often associated with “arts polluted” by capitalists or “tradition destroyed” by colonialists. *Gisaeng* became even more marginalized and despised later in the post-colonial period, as it was marketed as a popular sex tourism attraction.

In the late 19th century, female entertainers were grouped in several ways according to the ideologically determined classification. The first classification was based on their tie with the government of Joseon: *gwan-gi* or *chang-gi*. *Gwan-gi* was official *gisaeng*, who participated in the court- or the *pungnyu*- music scenes while *chang-gi* normally engaged in folk music genres performing *pansori* or *japga* (Kwon 2001). Another way was to group *gisaeng* into three grades: *il-pae* (first grade), *yi-pae* (second grade), and *sam-pae* (third grade). *Il-pae* referred to authentic or legitimate

gisaeng (i.e. *gwan-gi*) who received official training in music, dance, art, and medicine to serve the royal family and the higher class. *Yi-pae* was mostly former *il-pae* associated with local groups performing similar roles to *il-pae*'s but they also provided secret prostitution as a part of entertainment. The *sam-pae* was prohibited from performing a court or classic repertoire, thus they primarily engaged in folk music genres and prostitution (Lee 1981; Mueller 2013; Suh 2005). *Gisaeng* class system gradually disappeared due to several political, social changes during the late 19th and the early 20th century.

The ideas of Western civilization and enlightenment emerged in the late 19th century ostensibly “freed” *gisaeng* and assigned them an image of socially “successful” artists who are also agents of economic activity. This is similar to the newly introduced idea of *sinyeoseong* (New Women) who received modern education and participated in social matters. Suh further described how these “New Women” emerged:

To modern, Western viewpoint filtering into Korea began to problematize the low position of women, regarding women as sacrificial lambs upon the altar of premodern patriarchy in Korea. Furthermore, the status of Korean women was seen as a “feudalistic relic” and as an indicator of a tradition of “barbarism” which was wholly denounced in the discourses on civilization and enlightenment produced in the latter part of the Joseon Dynasty and the early 20th century. This representation of Korean women as an “inferior other” was the projection of the Eastern or Korean

traditions and was diametrically opposed to Western modernity at that time. (Suh 2013, 12-13)

Just as the image of “New Women” produced the negative counterpart, the “Old-Fashioned Women,”¹² the notion of “modern *gisaeng*” also generated negative perceptions on *gisaeng*: even more sexualized, objectified, and commoditized. The colonial government announced “*Gisaeng and Chang-gi Regulation*” in 1908 (Jung 2007; Kwon 2001, 2009, 2014; Suh 2009) and drew legal definitions of them: *gisaeng* referred to both entertainers and hostesses and *chang-gi* indicated prostitutes. To increase tax revenue, the colonial rulers sought to bring *gisaeng* into the licensed prostitution system. Although the law drew subtle distinction between *gisaeng* and *chang-gi*, it treated them with little difference in practice. In the pre-colonial Joseon society, *gisaeng* was required to possess feminine values that were inseparable from their artistic skills. However under the colonial rule, *gisaeng*’s sexual appeal was rather highlighted than their artistic talent. It was colonial, male, and other’s gaze that transformed *gisaeng* into a sexualized product.

An incipient form of *gibu* (literally means *gisaeng*’s husband) emerged in the late Joseon Dynasty as financial supporters of *gisaeng*. In commodifying *gisaeng*’s body, *gibu* often served paradoxical roles: a husband or a teacher at times, but a pimp or a manager on other occasions. This was an extension of gendered relationships, where males took active and independent roles whereas females served passive and dependent

¹² Kim further explains that the notion of *sinyeoseong* (new women) created “a public forum for debates on the status and role of Korean women, doubly “othered” by Confucian patriarchal constraints and colonial oppression” (Kim 2013, 45).

positions. Even when performing, performers were mostly females (or their role was “limited” to performers), while teachers or composers were chiefly males. This distinction reinforced the notion of women as mere preservers and men as active promoters. Since *gisaeng*’s musical scope was influenced by public taste, many *gisaeng* became professional singers in *sinminyo* (newly composed folk song) genre while male performers remained in traditional music scene. The “authentic” *gugak* legacy could sustain under the Japanese colonial rule through the male-only *gugak* institution,¹³ while less authentic, “fusion” *gugak* was left for females.

In 1930s, *gisaeng* played a significant role in the colonial-modern culture with their major participation in theater, recording, and radio industry. Their repertoire also grew as the notion of “tradition” was broadened to include previously male-exclusive genres while new genres such as *sinminyo* emerged. Social recognition of female performers also increased as their social, economic, and cultural achievements increased, especially in the late colonial period. Leveraging on their artistry and popularity,¹⁴ female performers also became more engaged in participating in social matters and claiming their rights and identity. Their social movements included series of charity performances, nationalistic social movements, and patriotic movements (Hwang 2011;

¹³ Initially in the Joseon Dynasty, the national music institution was called Jangakwon. This later became Gyobangsa and Jangakgwa in the Daehan Empire, which succeeded the Joseon Dynasty before the Japanese colonial rule. The Japanese colonial government established Yiwangjik Aakbu as the institution for traditional court music of Korea. After the Independence in 1951, the institution was re-established as the National Center for Korean Traditional Performing Arts which later became the National Gugak Center of present (Lee S 2003).

¹⁴ According to Hwang (2011), many *gisaeng* led the latest fashion just as *sin yeoseong* (new women). In addition, few *gisaeng* were particularly received special treatment, even flying to various locations.

Lee J 2003). These were “collective activities” led by the official *gisaeng* union, *gwonbeon*, which was originally created by the colonial rulers, but soon developed into the foundation for *gisaeng*’s collective identity.

Gisaeng was the only signifier that represented all female entertainers from 1908 to 1948. It is impossible to conceive the period without referring to “colonial modernity,” and *gisaeng*’s identity of the time was also entwined with several “new” changes: the dissolution of the monarchy system, the advance of the Japanese colonial rule, the eradication of the caste system, the emergence of females as principle agents, and the expansion of public media, popular culture and performance genres. According to what has been investigated, the colonial modernity practiced by *gisaeng* was different from what other “modern” women experienced as the agent of consumption, *yeohaksaeng* (female student) or *sinyeoseong* (new women). While many claim that the *gisaeng*’s body was largely objectified or victimized by male gaze or colonial power, few focus on *gisaeng*’s identity as an independent agent. Therefore, it is noteworthy to highlight their potentials as modern citizens, who embarked collective actions not only for their own rights but social justice as well.

Military Regimes (1963-1988): Nationalism

Soon after the Independence in 1945, Korea was divided into two and the Korean War (1950-1953) broke out, which is often labeled as “a great power struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union superimposed on a civil war between North and South Korea” (Stueck 2013, 2). Diverse performances that burgeoned after the

Independence to preserve and promote traditional performing arts had to face unfortunate collapse with the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 (Pilzer 2006). In the destroyed economy of post-colonial and post-war Korea, the discontinuity in performance activities imposed financial hardships on *gisaeng*. The US army military government, which temporarily governed the southern half of Korea after the Independence, took actions to abolish *gisaeng* (or *chang-gi*) in 1946. The initial intention was to “clean up” the vestiges of Japanese colonialism and “save” sexually exploited women, but it eventually led the disappearance of *gisaeng*.

Among important cultural shifts of the period were the separation of traditional music from popular music and the unprecedented emphasis placed on “traditional” music. As the notion of “traditional” music (or Joseon music) began to develop, the division between popular music (mostly by female entertainers) and “traditional” or “authentic” music (mostly by male performers) became more established. Since then, “traditional” music has been generally referred as *gugak* or *hanguk eumak* (literally meaning “Korean music”) till today. However, Korean musicologists often criticized the use of the term *gugak* for its root in Japanese colonial rule. In addition, the term *hanguk eumak* also limits the scope of Korean traditional music only to that of South Korea and lacks adequate references to different musical fields within South Korea. In fact, the term *hanguk eumak* arose from anticommunism ideology, which sought to secure the legitimacy of South Korea against that of North Korea (Jeon 2004).

In the post-war Korea, the desire to reestablish “the national identity” was combined with discourses of anti-communism and militarism, and *gugak* served as an

effective means for the goal. Even during the war, a few court music performers, mostly men, received financial support from the National Center for Korean Traditional Performing Arts (now National Gugak Center) established in 1951.¹⁵ The center first clarified their goal to preserve and promote traditional music, *a-ak* (court music) in particular, as most of the founding members were from the Yiwangjik Aakbu, the traditional Korean court music institution under the Japanese colonial government. The center also began to operate educational programs and provide government scholarships to nurture “new” *gugak* performers.

The South Korean government increased its support for Korean traditional arts during military regimes (1961-1979). Jeon (2005) highlights the military coup in 1961 as the most significant incident throughout *gugak* history in post-colonial South Korea. With the firm support of Chung-hee Park, who was a president and a dictator, the government:

began to take an interest in canonizing national culture in the face of the massive social revolution brought on by South Korea’s state-driven race to ecumenic prosperity, and as a source of legitimacy vis-a-vis the North, which has attempted to modernize and revolutionize Korean traditional arts by developing traditional instruments, music, and dance according to

¹⁵ In Korean, the institution is called Guknip Gugakwon, which literally means the national center for national music. Previously, the institution used National Center for Korean Traditional Performing Arts for its official English name, but now it has changed into National Gugak Center.

principles deemed “scientific” or “rational.” Or just in imitation of the West. (Pilzer 2006, 305)

To create new history, two apparently different ideologies resonated together: anti-communism and nationalism. The core efforts included the enacting the Protection of Cultural Properties Act, establishing new branches and institutions of the National Gugak Center, designating Human Cultural Assets, strengthening *gugak* courses in universities, and providing musical contests and performance events. It is undeniable that these cultural and educational policies supported the *gugak* scene at some point. However, in return, *gugak* musicians could never be free from military government’s censorship, and *gugak* became a largely institutionalized genre after all.

Also in 1972, the government promoted the existing national *gugak* training institution, which was founded in 1951, to the National Gugak Middle and High School of today. In the present, a large number of *gugak* musicians are graduates of these schools, putting the *gugak* scene in close association with National Gugak Middle and High School. In addition, the establishment of university degrees in *gugak* and the Human Cultural Asset system generated the idea of “professional performers” and “scholarly researchers” in *gugak*. Although these newly created professions often provided economic rewards as well as social recognition, they were initially dominated by men as the national *gugak* training institution only accepted male students during the first eight years.

While the number of females who received formal education in *gugak* has been constantly rising, “professional” *gugak* careers are still dominated by males. A master *gayageum* player Choi’s interview clearly describes this gap:

Yes, I still remember many junior colleagues of mine, successful alumnus... Jeong, a master *piri* player, and Kim who recently retired from Ewha Woman’s University, and who else... Lee, a former director of the National Gugak Center, and Cho also in Ewha University... Kim in Yongin University...But women now... Yes, there were female students from its eighth-year, but I don’t recall any. Among women... Let me see, I am not sure...I don’t think there’s any. No woman. (Choi 2013, 83-84)

In addition, the influence of militarism resulted in a strict hierarchical order among students, especially for males, which sometimes entailed physical violence. My interlocutor, a National Gugak High School graduate, reflected in an interview that older students often imposed group punishments on him and his male cohorts as “to tighten discipline among male students” (P). Another interviewee who also graduated from the school, experienced group punishments from older female students from the same major but noted, “Physical violence happened only among male students” (L). Master Choi compared this hierarchy with that of military:

Arts or music schools tend to impose strict discipline among students. In the past, was even worse. Today’s students still follow some traditions... Beating younger students was just nothing. It was just like beating soldiers in the military...there were even occasions where students got

killed from that... None of first admitted students to the institutions was killed. We even made a joke about that. (Choi 2013, 81-82)

The government further institutionalized musical contests. The military regime frequently reorganized cultural institutions for the sake of their political purpose. After reorganizing cultural organizations, the government sought to “modernize” *gugak* by adopting elements from Western music scene. Therefore various *gugak* award ceremonies, *changjak-gugak* (newly-created or newly-composed *gugak*) composition contests, and musical performance contests have been hosted since 1962. These were significant as they could directly affect musicians’ professional careers and encourage the development of *changjak-gugak*. While these government efforts created new genres and opportunities for both men and women to pursue their professional careers, it also caused further gender issues, which still remain in the current *gugak* scene.

National contests began to receive a great recognition in 1980s (Jeon 2014), as the government began to provide a special exemption from two-year military service to the winners of some national-scale contests.¹⁶ Granting such beneficial exemption

¹⁶ About two-year military service is mandatory for the most of South Korean males. According to Moon (2005), over 90% of the Korean male population serves their military duty. Therefore, South Korean people have been particularly sensitive towards military practices or issues. Yoo Seung-jun (or Steve Yoo), for instance, was a successful pop singer and dancer before the controversies around his exemption from the military service. Though his choice of a U.S. citizenship waived him from his military duty in South Korea, it brought huge criticism and public anger since he was continuously positioned as the “national” pop icon (Fuhr 2015, 211-212). This backlash further forced him to quit his music career. The Korean military service is “a collective ritual for young men...to be initiated not only as socially accepted Korean citizens but also as virtuous and respected” men (Ibid. 212).

became widespread and further endorsed certain contests that provide such benefits.¹⁷ It is, therefore, an open secret that men would receive the first prize (and the exemption) when both men and women performed at a similar level of talent. Many of female performers who once participated in these contests argued, “It was males who received the first prizes, even though females were better” (S). In addition, a female singer also interviewed that she was criticized for her winning over male contestants; she heard people saying, “You don’t have to serve in the military since you are a woman. Why didn’t you give away?” (K)

The idea of “*gugak* composition” and the term *changjak gugak* or *sin-gugak* (“new” *gugak*) also emerged based on the ruling ideologies of the military regimes: modernizing and industrializing South Korea. Hwanghwamannyeonjigok, by a male composer Kim Gi-su, is often regarded as the first *changjak gugak* piece, since Kim used staff notation in composing *gugak*. He was a prominent *gugak* composer and conductor, who later served as the first General Director of the National Gugak Center from 1973 to 1978. However he has also been criticized for composing musical pieces to celebrate Japanese imperialism during the Japanese colonial rule: “he was an extremely political figure who merely *pursued mechanical modernity through his worship of court music and Western music*” (Jeon 2005, 227, emphasis added). Several composers followed him

¹⁷ According to “Acknowledged list of competitions” of the Military Manpower Administration, there are 41 international competitions for the western music performers, dancers, and athletes. Among seven national competitions, three *gugak* contests are listed—Onnara (meaning whole nation) Gugak Contest, Dong-A Korean Traditional Music Competition, and the National Competition of Jeonju Daesaseupnori (see the official website for the Military Manpower Administration).

during 1960s and 70s, but no work of female composers during this period was highlighted.¹⁸ Since many pieces from this era have been continuously re-performed and re-arranged, especially by young students, it again represents the absence of female voices in the early stage of “modern *gugak*.”

The Democratic Government (1993-present): Globalization

To cope with increasing demands for direct democracy, a direct presidential election system was reinstated in 1987. The outset of Kim Young-sam administration in 1993 marked the official end of the military dictatorships that lasted for 32 years and established a new social order: “banning military involvement in politics, restricting the power of the executive body, enlarging the power of the legislative body, abolishing the proportional representation system, reducing censorships, and enhancing the protections on political freedom and other human rights” (Kim 2000). This social shift to democracy forced *gugak* to face new challenges in reality. *Gugak* was highly dependent on supports from the military regimes, even though their cultural policy was rather spurious. With the disappearance of such supportive military regimes, *gugak* musicians had to find their own ways to survive against competition with musicians from other fields.

Popularization and globalization have been long-term goals in contemporary *gugak* circles, under the national agenda of “*gugak-eui daejunghwa* (popularization of

¹⁸ Several composers, including Lee Seong-cheon, Lee Gang-deok, Lee Su-ja, Cho Jae-seon, Hwang Byeong-gi, Kim Yong-jin, Lee Sang-gyu, Lee Hae-sik, Jeon In-pyeong, Park Il-hun, Kim Heung-gyo, Paek Dae-wung, Park Beom-hun, started their musical career through *Sin-gugak jakgok mojip* (newly-composed *gugak* contest) in 1965 and other nation-driven contests (Jeon 2005).

gugak)” and “*gugak-eui segyehwa* (globalization of *gugak*),” which were initiated in the 1980s and 1990s respectively. Educators, researchers, journalists, festival and concert organizers, musicians, as well as government officials actively spread the two buzzwords through public media and academic works to bring *gugak* and the general population closer. Alienation of *gugak* from the public reflected two major disconnections between two. First, public indifference and prejudice against *gugak*’s musical traits as old-fashioned, difficult to appreciate, and even boring. Second and more importantly, the absence of social reality in the *gugak* scene; *gugak* appeared to have disregarded social issues, while enjoying political and financial support from the military regimes.

There has always been a long hope for “securing audience,” behind the discourse of newly-composed *gugak* and world music-ization of *gugak*,¹⁹ which was given different terms like *sin-gugak* of 1960s, *changjak gugak* of 1970s and 1980s and fusion *gugak* of lately. After the growth of *minjung* (“people’s”) culture in 1980s, popular culture emerged. Since then, popular music has served as a reference point for *gugak* performers as they actively employed elements of the popular music scene in producing, presenting, and consuming *gugak*. Among diverse terms given to newly-composed *gugak*, fusion *gugak* is regarded as a general term to indicate this phenomenon, where *gugak* elements are fused with Western musical components. The emergence of the genre can be understood from several perspectives: 1) to satisfy contemporary audience’s musical taste influenced by Western music, 2) to express “new” identity of

¹⁹ Kim Hee-sun (2009) first introduced the term “world music-ization” in her paper, “Discourses of globalization and world music-ization of Korean music in contemporary South Korea.”

performers, 3) to market the genre better, or 4) to secure the legitimacy of young female performers in “traditional” *gugak* scene.

Traditionally, female *gugak* performers has been active in string instruments and vocal singing, and they are now also highly involved in newly-composed or fusion *gugak* scenes as well. The increasing number of females in the *gugak* scene has been largely driven by their enhanced socio-economic status: since South Korea achieved dramatic growth in its society and economy, women are now better educated and accepted as active agents. Since 1954 when Duksung Women’s University first established a degree program in *gugak*, other higher educational institutions began to provide similar programs. The burgeoning number of *gugak* degree programs in 1980s and 1990s has generated “highly educated *gugak* population,” who could actively participate in academic discourses. While almost 3000 students, mostly females, are studying in 21 *gugak* programs across South Korean universities, a considerable shortfall of professional *gugak* occupations has become a serious issue in today’s *gugak* field. This caused gender inequality in the job market, as it is relatively difficult for females to find jobs in the male-dominated *gugak* scene (e.g. national *gugak* performance groups or orchestras) (Kim 2012).

Taking this into account, it is not surprising that women have far outnumbered men in the newly-composed *gugak* or fusion music scene. Mueller points out this gender difference between certain genres as follows:

While on the whole traditional music and arts have moved towards a majority of female participants, a larger percentage of men have remained

in *aak* because of this association between men, upper-class literati and scholarship, and between women, kissing and artistry. Accordingly, the majority of traditional music scholars are men, and *aak* and *jeongak* presently have more male musicians than *changjak gugak* and fusion music, which are far more dominated by female musicians. Men might stick to performing more traditional genres, especially ones with such significant historical roots, as a way to legitimize their role as “historian” rather than as “artist,” which latter might be less acceptable in the family and social structure. (Mueller 2013, 59)

Conclusion

In this chapter, I followed the history of female performers in *gugak* history from the Joseon Dynasty to the present day, in relation to four major socio-political events: (1) the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910) and Neo-Confucianism; (2) the Japanese colonial rule (1910-1945) and colonial modernity; (3) military regimes (1963-1988) and nationalism; and (4) the democratic governments (1993-present) and globalization. These ruling ideologies, together with the modernization and industrialization process, in Korea have created certain role distinctions between the genders: men as creators and promoters, and women as learners and preservers. As similarly stereotyped musical tradition has been transmitted to and performed in today’s *gugak* field, female participation in the *gugak* scene has been largely neglected, distorted, or underrepresented. Therefore, *gisaeng* of

the past or female entertainers of today have merely remained as sexualized objects in the male gaze, often associated with negative images.

Butler's (1990) theorization of a "culturally intelligible" agency is based on the belief that "female agency is constructed through culture rather than against it" (Bae 2011, 31). Throughout the Korean history, female entertainers have existed in between binaries: male and female, high and low, old and new, pre-modernity and modernity, muse and creator, and preserver and pioneer. Building on the Halls' (1990) notion of cultural identity, I perceive their "cultural identity" as a "production," that is never complete, constantly evolving, and always in context. In this perspective, "cultural identity is not merely a matter of being, but more importantly a matter of becoming" (Shin 2008, 100). Hall further highlights that cultural identity is in constant change in regards to the forces of time, culture, and power:

[Cultural identity] is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialized past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in a mere 'recovery' of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past. (Hall 1990, 225)

In this way, cultural identities are not an essence, but the points of identifying or a “positioning” oneself. As Hall (1990) argues, female *gugak* musicians’ cultural identity continuously incorporates a politics of identity and positioning, constructed by representation through memory, fantasy, narrative, and myth.

CHAPTER III

BEYOND *GUGAK* AND FUSION *GUGAK*:

FEMALE PERFORMERS AND MUSICAL IDENTITY

In September 2013, the Korean Traditional Performing Arts foundation (KoTPA), jointly with Musicians Institute (MI), provided a residency program in Los Angeles, CA. About twenty participants, including performers and producers, with background in *gugak* and other music gathered together for the orientation meeting. Much like other governmental strategies of South Korea to promote *gugak*, this 2-week long, overseas residency workshop by KoTPA was a pilot project to explore the possibility of “globalizing *gugak*,” which has been an important national agenda of since then. The workshop, therefore, intended to enhance and promote *gugak* knowledge and skills of global participants.

As a participant,²⁰ I shared my room with Jungmin Seo, a young *gayageum* (a 12-stringed Korean traditional zither) performer of [SU:M]. Being of a similar age and trained in the same instrument, we quickly became close friends. With my education in *gugak*, I knew many *gugak* performers who were active in so-called contemporary *gugak* or fusion *gugak*, which blends the elements of Western music and *gugak*. Seo, however, introduced her team - a female duo - as a “world music” ensemble, rather than a “fusion *gugak*” or “a *gugak*” group. Interestingly, three other female participants also identified

²⁰ I was selected to participate in the workshop as a *gugak* producer and mandated to take five courses: Internet Marketing, Personal Management, Music Business Careers, Media Relations, and Global Music Marketplace. In addition to this, there were six additional courses for both performers and producers.

their music outside *gugak* or fusion *gugak*: a *haegeum* performer and composer Joo-hee Yoon defined her music as Korean cross-over music; Myung-jin Ko, a percussionist of Rhythm Collage, introduced her team as a creative percussion group; and Min-ah Jeong, a *gayageum* performer, described herself as a “modern *gayageum*-er.” In addition to their “unique” framing, their music sounded neither “traditional” nor “fused.” Who are these female performers and how should their music be understood? How do they establish, represent, and negotiate female identity through *gugak*?

In this chapter, I examine the presence, status, and role of female performers in the contemporary *gugak* scene. I first briefly explain “fusion *gugak*,” focusing on its background, socio-cultural value, scholarly discourses, and agents. Throughout the chapter, primary attention is drawn to female-only groups and female soloists who established female identity that is “distinctive” from traditional concepts. Female composers play a critical role in shaping female identity in music. Considering the history of marginalized women in male-dominated *gugak*, female *gugak* composers hold “an important political position and strategy” (McClary 1991, 19). I begin by providing a brief overview of the current *gugak* scene and its key gender issues, and move on to exploring the musical style (lyrics and structure) and composition style of a few works, as well as their performing components such as appearance, stage properties, and movements. I further comment on the aesthetics, intentions, and characteristics of the works, in terms of its social and political implications.

Female Participation in Fusion *Gugak*

Gugak has been regarded as an old-fashioned, inexplicable, and boring music to the public, even though *gugak* education programs have grown in their quantity and quality with governmental support. While the most traditional and authentic *gugak* managed to survive from socio-cultural upheavals under strong governmental protection (Chapter Two), it became further isolated from the public as *gugak* has been considered as incompatible with contemporary Korea. Thus, many *gugak* performers, especially younger generations, strive to create more appealing, adequate, and accessible music. One of such efforts resulted in the creation of a new genre, what is commonly called “fusion *gugak*”; it blends various genres of Western music - such as pop, jazz, rock, even electronic - with *gugak*.²¹ With the growing popularity of fusion *gugak* since 1990s, the genre has been frequently debated and referred in the discourses on Korean music (Lee S 2003, 2004a, 2004b; Sutton 2011).²² Despite some controversy, it is irrefutable that fusion *gugak* has expanded and galvanized the *gugak* scene by providing new opportunities for young *gugak* performers and females in particular.

Owing to socio-economic development of Korea, females now claim relatively comparable, though not entirely equal, social status to men. Women of today enjoy greater social mobility and individual liberty, obstacles to their socio-economic

²¹ There have been continuous debates among *gugak* scholars and performers on how this relatively “new” *gugak* genre be called. Some common terms found in scholarly works and public media include fusion *gugak*, *sin-gugak*, *changjak gugak*, and contemporary *gugak*. Among these, fusion *gugak* commonly refers to music that features the elements of *gugak* and genres other than *gugak*. In this chapter, I use the term “fusion *gugak*” to indicate the types of music that generally perceived as “fusion *gugak*” to the public and the media.

²² Since focusing on the debates about fusion *gugak*—including its terminology, boundary, or authenticity—is not the primary intention in my thesis, I will limit my discussion to its characteristics and significance in a relation to the current *gugak* scene and female performers.

participation have declined both in quantity and quality (Bartky 1988). Therefore, the fusion *gugak* scene now predominantly performed by young female performers can be interpreted as a reflection of these changes in Korean society. Fusion *gugak* groups, however, usually have more male members and female performer's role within a group is limited: the genre became more gendered. For instance, most of the first generation fusion *gugak* groups, such as Puri and Seulkidung, are either pure or mostly male groups. Even though Seulkidung currently has four female performers among all eleven members, including Eun-il Kang, Gil-seon Jeong, Jee-hee Kim, and Hye-yeon Oh, it is important to note that most of them (except for Oh, the singer) are performing instruments that have been traditionally regarded as "feminine" ones. Not to mention, composers and team leaders of these groups are all men.

Fusion *gugak*'s nationwide popularity and government support have contributed to the birth of countless musicians who have labeled themselves as "fusion *gugak*" groups. More importantly, fusion *gugak* has become "the powerful medium" where "women have creatively established their place...despite the ideological prominence of this male-centered tradition" (Flores 2015, iv). There has been an increasing number of all-female groups or soloists in contemporary *gugak* scene. As the most desirable jobs in the field that ensure a stable income and social status—including professors, teachers, and *gugak* orchestra members—were already occupied by older generation musicians, it became nearly impossible to get such jobs for the younger generation. This tight job market for young *gugak* musicians, especially for female musicians, encouraged them to "create" jobs for themselves.

Therefore, the field of fusion *gugak* has served as a “new realm” for these young female performers. Women no longer need to wear male costume as they had to in Confucian rituals. At some points, it freed women to express their own feelings and emotions through their music. If success can be measured by popularity and profit, women can be as successful as men in this realm: they are now “visible.” However, this visibility resulted in several gender issues as it created another type of “docile bodies.”

Bartky argues:

[T]he female body enters “a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it” (Foucault 1977, 138). The disciplinary techniques through which the “docile bodies” of women are constructed aim at a regulation that is perpetual and exhaustive—a regulation of the body’s size and contours, its appetite, posture, gestures and general comportment in space, and the appearance of each of its visible parts. (Bartky 1988, 80)

While these women themselves offer resistance to patriarchy, images of normative femininity—“its sexuality, more precisely, its presumed heterosexuality and its appearance”—are coming more and more to be centered on woman’s body (Ibid. 81).

For instance, many female *gugak* groups labeled themselves as “fusion *gugak* groups,” were organized under a similar system that K-pop industry employs to market their groups in South Korea and throughout world. Identical to the concept of K-pop idol groups, MIJI have framed themselves as a *gugak* “idol group” or “girl group.” The team was created and trained by a professional entertainment company, Loen Entertainment,

and is sponsored by the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism of South Korea. Their training system, appearance (make-up and costumes), musical and performance style, and promotion activities closely resemble those of K-pop girl groups or the Chinese Twelve Girls Band.²³

The group leader Ji-in Nam explained, “We believe there is no absolute boundary between *gugak* and popular music. *Gugak* cannot be limited to traditional music...Newly created music can be also regarded as *gugak* from a long-term perspective in history. Therefore, MIJI can be considered as a *gugak* group in a broad sense.”²⁴ In addition to musical styles, many female fusion *gugak* groups, including MIJI, have featured similar concepts that elaborate feminine sexuality. For instance, all five members of *gugak* girl group Queen, performed in Tamra cultural festival in October 2015, wore high heels and cocktail dresses that revealed bare shoulders and legs. Though all members were playing instruments, their performance was carefully choreographed using legs, arms, and hips. Another *gugak* girl group Meein also features similar performances wearing a modernized version of the traditional *hanbok*. Gendered images are also clearly foregrounded in their group names: Meein literally refers to “beautiful women” and Yeorang means “beautiful and clear sound,” and Yeonhuae means “queen’s favored lotus.” Other groups who have relatively gender-neutral names, such as SOREA

²³ The 12 Girls Band is “a techno/rock/ethnic fusion Chinese instrumental music ensemble” (Yang and Saffle 2010, 88). Since its establishment, the team has received a great attention both in China and the world market. Their musical style, including instrumentation and genres, are very similar to Korean fusion *gugak*. Kim (2012) also points out the similarity between MIJI and the 12 Girls Band.

²⁴ Ji-in Nam, interview by Ji-yeon Kim, *Enews 24*, February 12, 2013, <http://enews24.interest.me/news/article.asp?nsID=112001>.

Band and Sorididim, still feature similar concepts in terms of their appearances and performance repertoires.

It is noteworthy that the most of these *gugak* girl groups have promoted themselves in accordance with certain type of femininity: beautiful (lighter skin and slim figure) and sexually attractive women. This further reinforced the “conventional standards of feminine body display” (Bartky 1990, 78). The images of females portrayed in mass media mostly include female musicians in skimpy dresses or miniskirts, arousing the concerns for objectifying and commoditizing female body in the *gugak* scene (Figure 2.1). This further creates the unequal power relationship between the girls and viewers or audiences (Berger 1972). Women, in the male gaze, as Warwick notes:

Being forced into the position of object, something to be looked at and possessed, girls and women may indeed learn not the desire for the other, but the desire to be desired, and it is a shame that the female experience of sexuality emphasizes being sexually attractive to men as more important than experiencing desire and sexual excitement. (Warwick 2007, 73)



Figure 2.1. A CD cover of *gugak* girl group, MIJI.
Courtesy of First Entertainment. <https://www.facebook.com/firstenter>. (accessed May 10, 2016)

This notion is further presented in the fusion *gugak* scene. For instance, a *gugak* ensemble group, Bulsechul marks their uniqueness as they only have male members while most of fusion *gugak* groups are female-only or female-dominated. Unlike other fusion groups, they emphasized the musical elements of “traditional” *gugak* (Figure 2.2). Kim, the *haegeum* player of the group, even disregarded the idea of fusion *gugak* when he explained the concept of their group: “Today, many of *gugak* ensembles claim to be ‘fusion *gugak*’ teams. However, they are rather ‘popular music band’ merely employing *gugak* instruments. The original intention of our team is ‘presenting the essence of *gugak* that most of fusion *gugak* team have failed to perform properly.’”²⁵ In addition to this, a

²⁵ Yong-ha Kim, interview by Yun-jong Yoo, *Dong-A Ilbo*. January 7, 2010. <http://news.donga.com/3/all/20100107/25242139/1>.

gugak critic Yun commented, “Bulsechul’s music is created *inside* of traditional music, excluding foreign languages”²⁶ (Yun 2010, emphasis mine).



Figure 2.2. Korean music ensemble, Bulsechul.
Courtesy of Bulsechul. <https://www.facebook.com/bulsechul>. (accessed May 17, 2016)

Female Musicians’ Voice in Contemporary *Gugak*

Aside from *gugak* girl groups, there are all-female groups that need to be viewed from a different angle. Some young female performers such as [SU:M], YIEN, Jaram Lee, Min-ah Jeong, and Joo-hee Yoon, have framed themselves as “other” types of

²⁶ Ibid.

music performers, presenting a wide array of musical feature from world music, modern *gugak*, kinetic Korean music, cross-over band, and contemporary *gugak*.. More importantly, these performers infuse their own “voice” into their music as they produce, write, compose, and present it. This makes these female musicians significant, as their active roles in musicking process to some extent overcome long-existing constraints placed against female producers and composers in the *gugak* field.

Cixous (1976) and Irigaray (1985) explain the potential of “a female language” (*l’écriture feminine*), “as a check or counterforce to the discourse it tries to displace” (Keilian-Gilbert 2000, 65). The autonomous female voice, therefore, has musical, social, and political significance. Keilian-Gilbert further argues that these female in music can: “1) shift focus or emphasis, ...2) be the effect of radical discursive forms, ...3) effect a strategically oppositional procedure, ...4) configure self-reflexive and alternate forms, ...and 5) sound a music body (Keilian-Gilbert 2000, 65-67).” Building on this perspective, I demonstrate how these female artists present and negotiate their identities through their own “female language.” Imbuing own voice to their music reveals how gender identity is constantly questioned, negotiated, and confirmed at intrapersonal, interpersonal, and societal levels. Taking this into account, I examine roles of female *gugak* performers today and inquire what *gugak* means to them and Korean society in broad.

“I Want to Be Me”: Women’s Musical Identity²⁷

On March 20, 2015, the duo [SU:M] got on stage for the second time during a three-day musical showcases held in Paramount Theater, Austin, Texas. Jeong-min Seo and Ji-ha Park took place and launched into their new piece, *Neo Shin Bang Gok* featuring rhythmic, fury, piercing sound of a *piri*, a Korean bamboo flute. The hall was fully-packed and I noticed that I was the only Korean who came to see their performance. Further I also recognized that most of the audience came for The Residents, who were to perform right after [SU:M]. There was little, if any, information provided to the audience about the duo at the scene prior to its performance, other than a brief description on the South by Southwest (SXSW) website which introduced the group as a world music ensemble. [SU:M] were evaluated purely for their music and could “earn” a standing ovation from the audience.

[SU:M] are a duo formed in 2007 by two female *gugak* musicians, Ji-ha Park and Jeong-min Seo (Figure 2.3). Pronounced “soom” in Korean, the name [SU:M] literally means breath in Korean. The name also symbolizes the group well, as Ji-ha Park is originally a *piri* (bamboo oboe) player, who is also skilled in *Yanggeum* (dulcimer) and *Saenghwang* (pipe organ played with breath). Jeong-min Seo is a *gayageum* (a 12-string Korean zither) player and often plays a modernized version of 25-string *gaygeum*. Throughout the showcase in Austin, Texas, [SU:M] played five musical pieces. Most of

²⁷ The subtitle here is adopted from Gracyk’s book, *I Wanna be Me* (2001), whose title originally came from Sex Pistol’s song “I Wanna be Me” (1979). Gracyk thought the title implies “a symptom that the singer knows he must always remain subject to larger social forces” (Gracyk 2001, 6).

them were from their second album, released in 2014. After the showcase, in a midst of the standing ovation, Ji-ha Park briefly commented:

We are [SU:M] from Korea. Thank you for coming to our showcase. We play Korean traditional ‘instrument,’ but we don’t play Korean traditional ‘music.’ Today we play pieces from our compositions, and our stories.

I was especially intrigued by her comments: Why do they refuse to label themselves as a *gugak* group or Korean traditional music group? How is their music different from that of “others” in the *gugak* scene? What are their motivations or intentions in creating their own music?



Figure 2.3. [SU:M] in an international showcase.
Courtesy of [SU:M]. <https://www.facebook.com/breathmusic2>. (accessed May 29)

When I asked female *gugak* musicians about their motivations for creating their own music and performing it, most of them simply replied, “I want to tell MY STORIES,” or “I want to do MY MUSIC.” Ji-ha Park also admitted:

I like *gugak* as I played *piri* since I was a middle school student. But when I play it, I feel a little weird because I don’t live in ‘that’ time, PAST. I live in PRESENT, in the 21st century. So I want to make my own music.

Min-ah Jeong also asserts, “I want to create ‘Min-ah Jeong’s music,’ not *gugak*.” This desire to express or reflect one’s identity may be the primary motivation for music making and listening. If music can be perceived as a type of language, these musicians came to realize that the language of *gugak* is no longer adequate or capable in presenting their story. Considering that *gugak* as “national music” has largely been associated with collective identity, this emergence of subjective identity supports what Barker (1997) contends: “national identities” are replaced by “hybrid identities.”

According to Jeon (2013), young *gugak* musicians hold doubts about: 1) their life as an ordinary person, 2) their music as authentic work, and 3) their career as a famous artist. Here, the second doubt directly correspond to the question, “what kind of music should I pursue?” Choosing one’s musical path may seem like a pure personal matter, but it is also a social one, since this essentially leads to finding a balance between survival and recognition.

Indeed, many of Min-ah Jeong’s works feature these survival struggles. The lyrics of *Jumeokbap* (Rice Ball) is based on her true story, she explained, “I lived off my

friend's place to save money to prepare my next album. I overheard that one literally hit a jackpot selling rice balls on street, so I made rice balls and sell them on street. On the first day, I sold about 30-ish rice balls, but numbers went down day-by-day. Eventually I had to quit." While music itself has cheerful and bright melody, the lyrics illustrates young musician's economic struggle:

After quitting my tedious work,
I made rice balls with a great ambition
To be free, to be a real musician
I made rice balls to fully focus on my music

Doing so, I can make myself some time,
Doing so, I can save myself from caring too much about others,
Doing so, I can lose extra weight and earn extra money,

This would be the best chance in my life! So, I made rice balls.
I thought it would be easy, I thought it would be simple.
If it would be that easy, everyone would sell rice balls!

Scary, scary, scary, what if I get kicked out?
Scary, scary, scary, what if I end up paying fines?
Scary, scary, scary, what if I mess things up?
Scary, scary, scary, I have already started,
Scary, scary, scary, what should I do?²⁸

Indeed, she was a representative example of "young *gugak* musicians" suffered from the tough job market; who tried but failed to grasp a "stable," "hard-to-get" job, and suffer from financial difficulties that put pressure on her life and music. Her musical identity, therefore, is "best understood as an experience of this *self-in-process*" (Frith 1996, 109). Smith and Watson argue the modes of self-reference:

²⁸ Jeong, Min-ah, the lyrics of *Jumeokbap* (Rice Ball). Seoul: Sony Music, 2011.

[n]ow include visual textual, voiced, and material imprints of subjectivity, extending the possibilities for women to engage both “woman” and “artist” as “a social and cultural formation in the process of construction” (Nochlin 15) and reconstruction. (Smith and Watson 2002, 5)

To a similar extent, “identity is not a thing but a process—an experiential process which is most vividly grasped as music” (Frith 1996, 110). As these experiences always occur in the social context, these young performers’ musical identities should also be understood in social domains that transcend personal levels:

Questions of identity hinge on an individual’s position within a larger culture. If personal identity involves a constant struggle against the impositions and assumptions of others, then it also seems to depend on appropriations from a larger cultural apparatus that is beyond our individual comprehension. (Gracyk 2001, 8)

Therefore, “the self is always and imagined self but can only be imagined as a particular organization of social, physical and material forces” (Frith 1996, 109-110).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined female *gugak* performers and their musical practices in relation to fusion *gugak* or contemporary *gugak*. As many young performers have sought ways to close a gap between *gugak* and the public or to express their modern identity through fusion *gugak*, the genre has become most popular in the current *gugak* scene. However this also has entailed much dispute about the genre, triggering debates

on issues like authenticity, commodification, and globalization. In this chapter, I primarily focused on its value and limitations for female performers. Though fusion *gugak* has served as a realm of new opportunities for female *gugak* performers, it also caused several gender issues as by generating another type of “docile bodies” in the male gaze.

Following Cixious and Irigaray’s emphasis on “a female language,” I particularly focused on the emergence of young female performers, among countless, who have “own voice.” By highlighting the autonomous female voice, I explored how gender- and musical- identity have been constantly questioned, negotiated, and re-created. Following Foucauldian concept of subjectification,²⁹ Butler explains the relation between becoming a subject and power:

We are used to thinking of power as what presses on the subject from outside ... But if, following Foucault, we understand power as forming the subject as well, as providing the very condition of its existence and the trajectory of its desire, then power is not simply what we oppose but also, in a strong sense, what we depend on for our existence and what we harbor and preserve in the beings that we are. (Butler 1997, 2)

While women have largely been remained as an object in music scene, these female *gugak* performers became autonomous individuals claiming authorship that had not been allowed to women in the past.

²⁹ Also called as subjectivation or subjection.

CHAPTER IV
CREATING NEW PAN CULTURE:
BLURRING BOUNDARIES IN GUGAK

During my summer fieldwork in Seoul, I could finally attend Jaram Lee's performance, *UKCHUK-GA: Pansori Mother Courage*, on August 22, 2016. Jaram Lee is a *pansori* vocalist regarded as one of the most prominent figures in the current *gugak* scene. Since she did not have any performance scheduled in Seoul during my fieldwork, I went Cheonan, a city about two hours away from Seoul by car. As the performance began, I could see Lee, standing alone on stage in the spotlight. The stage set was even simpler than I expected: There was almost nothing on stage except for a small slope and band - a guitarist/bassist, a drummer, and a percussionist - back in the set, and only Lee was on the actual stage. Starting with her *changjak pansori* (newly composed *pansori*), Lee narrated and acted as over 25 different characters all by herself, for over two hours.

Pansori is a representative art form in Korean vocal music. It is a traditional musical storytelling, performed by a solo singer accompanied by a drummer. The term *pansori* is composed of two Korean words *pan* (a place where many people gather) and *sori* (song or voice). According to the National Gugak Center (2004), the term *pan* refers to “1) the venue of performances or where things happen; 2) the demonstration of a performers expertise in front of a large audience; or 3) the entire process of entertaining acts or activities” (13). The concept of *pan* has played an important role in Korean traditional performing arts: Korean *pan* culture. Therefore, Korean folklorists have

underscored its significance, with some have criticizing that *gugak* of today has continuously lost its *pan* culture.

The performance of *pansori* usually consists of three elements: *chang* (singing), *aniri* (narratives), and *neoreumsae* (gestures). Among all twelve repertoires, only five have been preserved and transmitted to the present day. While most of these stories are based on Neo-Confucian values of the Joseon Dynasty, many young *pansori* singers have created contemporary or *changjak pansori*. Lee's *UKCHUK-GA* is one example of this. "Providing its own modern take on the *Pansori* tradition, *UKCHUK-GA*...is a provocative retelling" of Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children* (1941). In the program book, she writes in the writer's/composer's note as: "With music, speech, song and the spaces in between, we are preparing another voyage...we are eager to see what journey our tales will unfold."

In this chapter, I further trace the "journeys" of female *gugak* musicians focusing on their musical practices in contemporary Seoul to answer following questions: Where and what do they usually perform? What led them to pursue the types of musical practices? How are they different from others? By highlighting some female performers' musical activities in terms of space and content, I further explore how these female musicians overcome existing boundaries and create their new spaces the *gugak* field.

Where to Perform: Outside of Comfort Zone

Scholars and critics, even mass media and the public, have denounced *gugak* as "music exclusively for insiders." The insiders here include *gugak* major students,

professionals, and their close friends and relatives. While *gugak* could maintain its tradition, although in staged forms, through government-supported institutions such as the National Gugak Center, it becomes more confined to a small number of people. The history of *gugak* as staged performances traces back to 1908 when Wonkaksa, the first and royal theater, was established (Yun 2014). Since then, *gugak* has largely been practiced as “inside” and “staged” art.³⁰ While helped to invent new performances and discover star performers, both performers and fans began to abandon the conventional *gugak* scene in search for a new realm. Due to technical difficulties in institutionalized space, folk music performances, in particular, have been excluded from this new custom, except for some vocal and instrumental music: losing the value of *pan* (Im 2012). Moreover, “inside” stages are not for everyone. As the government either operates or supports most of the stages, “what to perform” is highly influenced by what the government wished to see, with some considerations given to cultural and economic values. This, at some point, helped to promote and preserve pure *gugak*. While some performers from certain genres have been well-received in these spaces, young performers with experimental minds have tended to be less successful.

Further, some have raised concern about potential government censorship when performing in these governmental spaces. The military regimes of 1970s and 1980s imposed strict censorship on almost any form of art, including literature, dance, fine paintings, and theatrical and musical performances. It was only since mid-1990s that

³⁰ Besides scholarly debates about “what is real” in “staged authenticity,” prominent in tourism research, I primarily focus on how “staged authenticity” influences musical forms, genres, and spaces.

performers could escape from pre-performance censorship (UCHOONO 2016). Although such brutal restriction on freedom of expression no longer exists, many artists in South Korea are still pressured to engage in “self-censorship” as they largely dependent on the governmental supports, including financial aids. For example, director Kun-hyung Park, known for his satirical plays, claimed that he had been pressured to give up his funding for a play after directing a play that satirized the Park administration. Although one of his plays was already scheduled to be staged in November 2015, the venue, the National Gugak Center, pressured him to cancel the performance. Many *gugak* performers who viewed it as government censorship protested either by canceling their scheduled performances or refusing to perform in the National Gugak Center (Figure 3.1).

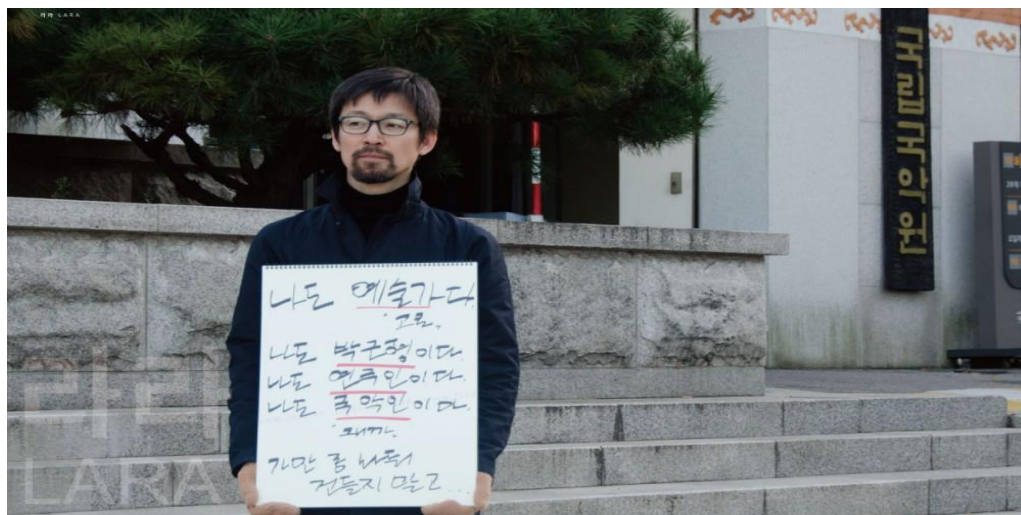


Figure 3.1. An artist protesting against government censorship in front of the NGC. Courtesy of UCHOONO. <http://hellolara.com/?p=62395>. (accessed April 6, 2016)

Lee (2015) placed even harsher criticism against employees of the center and *gugak* professionals, who remained silent to the incident. Such condoning silence is deeply rooted in the *gugak* field, which is dominated by personal ties based on school, region, and blood. The cartels have generated a system of “self-surveillance,” where “docile bodies” control their own “bodies, gestures, desires, and habits” (Fraser 1989, 24).

Apart from these institutionalized spaces, many young *gugak* performers have sought to discover new spaces for themselves. Some unconventional “outside” spaces that are distinctive from institutionalized “inside” venues began to emerge: busking (street performing) and clubbing. These *gugak* performers do not fear new atmosphere and audience and rather created a new form of *pan*. Since 2003, young *gugak* vocalists have performed at ‘Insadong Guerilla Sori-pan’ on a monthly base. *Gayageum*-er Min-ah Jeong went on a nationwide busking tour in the summer of 2009 and developed the experience into a different art form, a film titled *Fantastic Modern Gayagumer*.³¹ Most young *gugak* groups, including Jambinai and [SU:M], who have been commonly regarded as “successful” *gugak* performers also started their career in clubs around ‘Hongdae,’³² the center of nightlife for young people in South Korea.

Min-ah Jeong also made her debut in an indie club, Orange Fox, in 2004. Later, she moved around several clubs in Hongdae area, writing and performing her own music.

³¹ The film, *Fantastic Modern Gayagumer*, was premiered on August 18, 2011. It was a documentary film on a “modern *gayageum*-er” Jeong Min-ah’s busking tour in summer 2009.

³² ‘Hongdae’ is an abbreviation of *Hongik Daehakgyo* (Hongik University) in Seoul, South Korea.

She is considered as the first musician to play Korean traditional instrument in Hongdae clubs. After her debut, she released four regular albums and several mini albums. Her first album, *Sangsamong*, has sold over 10,000 copies, which is an exceptionally high number in the *gugak* market. Moreover, one of her songs, titled as *Mueosi Doe-eo* (What To Become) even appears in a middle school textbook. The public attention she has received, including several awards, demonstrates that the nation-wide success of her music, primarily “outside” the *gugak* realm.

While *gugak* performers have freed themselves from institutionalized spaces by stepping into Hongdae area clubs, females still face restraints put on them because of their gender. In terms of time and space, some “clubs” that operate till “late night” are often considered inappropriate for female performers, while males experience little constraint on when and where to perform. These restrictions reveal how the accessibility and possibility have applied to musicians in a different manner based simply on their sexualities. Despite the widespread belief that our society is moving toward a more equal society, stereotyped gender roles grant different degrees of accessibility to an individual man and woman, and “the way such experiences take a form of gendered spatiality” (Kim H 2007, 808).

Furthermore, the public attention drawn to female performers in Hongdae clubs, regardless of musical genres, tends to be directed to their appearances rather than their music. Often, female performers are either called a *Hongdae yeosin* (goddess of Hongdae) or an indie musician. Yojo, a famous singer-songwriter, who has been

continuously tagged as “the original goddess” or “the beauty” of Hongdae, spoke out her feelings and pressures:

While many focused more on my look and called me a *yeosin* (goddess) or *eoljjang* (the beauty), some who even don’t know about me at all looked on me with a jaundiced eye. It’s not me placing such labels on myself. Imagine a female singer-songwriter who has really good music and a so-so look. People don’t talk only about her music; they dragged me into the conversation, “You are much better artist than Yojo, who takes advantage of her pretty face.” I once felt so upset about this, so I asked every interviewer, not to use the word ‘goddess.’ PLEASE... The words kept appearing, though. (*laugh*) I know it can be such a compliment, but still... It is really a difficult problem for me. (Gang 2010)

Though Min-ah Jeong could position herself as an artist who demonstrates her skills to play “unique” instruments, she also could not avoid being labeled as a “Hongdae *gayageum* goddess” by the mass media. Instead of rejecting the label, she rather introduces herself as “a goddess” or *sijosae* (archaeopteryx) of Hongdae, embodying her identity as a Hongdae-based artist. In 2011, she even titled her concert as *Iutjip yeosindeul* (Neighborhood Goddesses), trying to narrow the distance between performers and audience: “I love performing in clubs as I can be so close to audience, even feeling their breath to my skin.”³³

³³ Min-ah Jeong, interview by Min-hee Kim, *Topclass*. March 2007.

What to Perform

In addition to “where” to perform, “what” to perform also matters to these young *gugak* performers. Since most of them do not belong to any agency company, they can create and present their music with greater freedom. The fact that women represent less than five percent of overall music producers and engineers worldwide implies seriously gendered power relations between the female performers and male producers: the issue of male control of the music industry is not unique to *gugak* or Korean performers.

When Min-ah Jeong worked with a music agency for her second album, she experienced too many restraints. Thus, she decided to work all by herself except the manufacturing process. Joo-hee Yoon, a *haegeum* soloist and composer, carried out multiple roles while preparing her hybrid concert,³⁴ ‘The Girl Into The Picture,’ in December 2012: she did preparations by herself from A to Z, including planning, conducting, writing, composing, directing, and performing.

On April 30, 2016, Min-ah Jeong and Seung-eun Sin, who is also a sing-a-song writer, presented an adult-only concert titled *Eumtang: eodiggaji haebwatni?* (Lust: How Far Have You Gone?)³⁵ Though it was a small-sized concert, the tickets sold out quickly and over 80 people attended. She recalled, “Normally we have about twenty people... It’s ridiculous this many people came here expecting women talking about sex.”

³⁴ The concerts featured various art forms, including music, dance, and visual arts.

³⁵ The Korean word *Eumtang* also can be interpreted as “Musical Bath” since *eum* means sounds and *tang* can refer to the bath. Thus the title of concert can be understood as doubly coded one (Figure 3.2).

Before closing the concert, she brought Foucault's book, *The history of sexuality*:

Volume 1: An Introduction, and quoted:

We are informed that if repression has indeed been the fundamental link between power, knowledge, and sexuality... it stands to reason that we will not be able to free ourselves from it except at a considerable cost: nothing less than a transgression of laws, a lifting of prohibitions, an irruption of speech, a reinstating of pleasure within reality, and a whole new economy in the mechanisms of power will be required. For the least glimmer of truth is conditioned by politics. (Foucault 1978, 5)

Then Min-ah Jeong explained that she wanted talk about “breaking taboos”: “apart from promoting gender equality or feminism, I want to address what and how things have become socially prohibited for certain genders. If one can actually ‘experience’ something, his or her freedom is enlarged than before.” While the image of a woman performing *gayageum* has been largely associated with the idea of *gisaeng* and her sexuality (Chapter Two), it can also symbolizes “a woman of virtue,” as musical aesthetics of *gugak* has often been considered as “calm and quite.” During the two-hour long concerts, the two female *gugak* performers presented their performances and shared conversations that are related to their personal, sexual experiences. The “showcased” female sex toys beside the stage were later handed over to audience who boldly replied to sudden questions from the performers.



Figure 3.2. Concert poster of *Eumtang* (The Lust). Courtesy of Tuna Label. <http://m.blog.naver.com/tunalabel/220685223800>. (accessed April 20, 2016)

Associating *gugak* with sexual narratives has been a practice forbidden, both implicitly and explicitly. *Gugak* and its instruments have served as a signifier for national identity and national pride, thus making *gugak* “the language through which sexual control and repression is justified” (Mayer 2012, 1). This has caused “gender ironies of nationalism,” since sexuality has been served as a key role in building and sustaining national identity (Mayer 2012, 2): Men have largely been rewarded while women have been constantly oppressed by the dominant power in South Korea and in the arena of *gugak*. Within this dynamic, female performers have suppressed expressing

their sexual desires: it is “a domain of restriction, repression, ...danger...and agency” (Vance 1984, 1). In addition, performers, especially *gayageum* players, have been cautious not to be labeled as *gisaeng*. Jeong Min-ah pointed out this “control” over women’s sexual desire, “When I look back, it seems like outside power is not the only fact that has controlled us for long time. In fact, we might have censored our own everyday life.” This recognition of internalized repression further indicates establishment of the agency.

Conclusion

The musical practices of *gugak* have remained as inside and staged art along with the development of western style theaters in Korea. Some places, such as the National Gugak Center, even have “secured” stages exclusively for *gugak* performances. While these venues have served as “*pan*” for *gugak* musicians, their accessibility has been limited to fewer performers and audience. Acknowledging the problem, many have argued that *gugak* performances need to venture outside the “comfort zone.”

In this chapter, I explored how female musicians have blurred the boundaries by placing themselves in new environments: performing in clubs or on streets. Furthermore, there has been greater variation in musical subjects. Through the efforts of female *gugak* performers, previously tabooed or neglected subjects (e.g. women’s sexual desire or preference or financial hardships of young generation) are being reevaluated as meaningful and timely stories. Appadurai calls this cultural dynamics as “deterritorialization” and further explains:

This term applies not only to obvious examples such as transnational corporations and money markets but also to ethnic groups, sectarian movements, and political formations, which increasingly operate in ways that transcend specific territorial boundaries and identities. (Appadurai 1996, 49)

By blurring boundaries, these musicians re-establish new space, or *pan*, for *gugak* performances that once considered missing in the field of *gugak*.

CHAPTER V
POLITICIZING GUGAK:
RESPONDING TO CONTEMPORARY KOREA

In the late evening of July 2 2015, while Ccot Byel, a female *gugak* performer, was explaining her performance to her audience, she commented, “You might consider *gugak* as something old, old Korean music. However, we do have musicians who are willing to *embrace today*: today’s issue and story, *our* story.” After she put strong emphasis on the particular words, she provided an overview of the performance, using her own definition of *gugak*:

Some might think *gugak* as something old, and I partially agree to it. But there are many *gugak* performers who want to *capture contemporary* in *our music*... Many *gugak* performers are living *the present day* and have tried hard to bring present issues onto their stage. The issues you are experiencing as well. This concert can be positioned as a part of this effort.

In the midst of the concert, Seung-hee Lee, a *hageum* performer, also added: “We are just sisters, girls living next door. Someone who might be really *familiar and close to you*... We are sisters doing various types of music from diverse backgrounds. With you gathered here, it feels like we are just exhibiting *our life* to the audience.”

Their comments sounded similar commonly emphasizing a point: contemporary. Considering the general perception of *gugak* as “legacy” from the past or even “taxidermied” music, reframing *gugak* in the contemporary context raised the following

questions: Why do they strongly emphasize the contemporary nature of *gugak*? How does their music capture and reflect the present time?

I begin the chapter by providing a detailed analysis of a special *gugak* program titled “Sisters’ Gugak” and held in July 2015, Seoul, South Korea. Based on what I observed during my fieldwork, I provide an overview of the program, elaborating on its title, goal and preparation; and analyze the performances provided in the program, focusing on their musical genre and style, composition and lyrics, instrumentations, attires, and stage settings. Acknowledging *gugak* performers’ desire to capture “contemporary aspects” in their music, I also look at “political” performances by female performers as instances of *gugak* “being and becoming” the idea of contemporary. I view female *gugak* performers’ musical practices as “performative politics,” which Butler (1997) suggested: performances, to certain degrees, have been “intervening and unsettling hegemonic meanings” (Butler 1997). The “performative politics,” therefore offers significant promise for “change,” or what Foucault called “potential for resistance” (Foucault 1988). I finally discuss how female *gugak* performers re-create, re-define, and re-present their identities in the contemporary context.

Project Performance, “Gugak Speaks the Era”

“Sisters’ Gugak” presented a series of performances that exclusively featured young female *gugak* performers. This was a part of the special project titled “Gugak Talks about the Era” held in the Namsangol Hanok Village, Seoul, South Korea. The whole projects went on for two months, from July 2 to August 30 2015 featuring three

main programs: “Sisters’ Gugak,” “Mr. Park Has Returned,” and “The Tempest.” The purpose of the whole project, as stated in its booklet, was “to talk about the current era through *gugak* performances that address issues of today.” During the first three weeks, the first program, “Sisters’ Gugak,” showcased five performances under the following themes: *haegeum*, Hongdae, *gut*, (*pan*) *sori*, and *minyo*. The second program, “Mr. Park Has Returned,” was a Korean puppet play presented by theater company Sanineomeo, while Mokwha Repertory Company presented “The Tempest,” which wrapped up the whole project.

As the overarching title, ‘Gugak Talks about the Era,’ indicates, all three programs addressed, or spoke about, key issues in today’s Korean society. The puppet play, “Mr. Park Has Returned” was based on traditional Korean puppet drama *Kkokdu Gaksi* (“puppet”). The performing team modified the original plot to match the contemporary context, highlighting its satirical aspects about a patriarchal society, monopolized power, corrupted government, and immoral people. While maintaining the integrity of the main character, Mr. Park or Park *cheomji*, a few new characters, especially females and normal-class people, were added. “The Tempest” by Mokwha Repertory Company was a dramatic re-interpretation of a Shakespeare’s original play; here, familiar stories from the Three Kingdom Era of ancient Korea and elements of Korean traditional performing arts were added.

“Sisters’ Gugak,” however, showed a feature unique from the other two programs, or possibly, even from all the other existing *gugak* programs: highly focused on a gender and young female musicians in particular (Figure 4.1). Most of the female

musicians appeared in “Sisters’ Gugak” are in their 20s and 30s, except for one, Dong-eon Kim who is in her 60s.



Figure 4.1. Poster of “Sisters’ Gugak.” Courtesy of Namsan Hanok Village. <https://www.hanokmaeul.or.kr>. (accessed June 10, 2015)

While their musical genres were different and some were even difficult to specify, all of them applied elements of Korean traditional performing arts to their music: lyrics of *minyo* (folk song) or *pansori* (narrative song), traditional instruments, or musical elements of *gugak*. Why was female solely focused in this program? What factors

contributed to the selection of these musicians? Who are these musicians and what are they performing? What does this performance signify as itself and in terms of *gugak* today? How is gender represented, and how is it different from other *gugak* performances?

Women's *Gugak*: "Sisters' Gugak" Performance

The "Sisters' Gugak," the first program of "Gugak Talks about the Era," featured five *gugak* performances. The performances were offered on Thursday through Saturday, from July 2 to 18, 2015. Each performance was given different subtitles that correspond to the following themes: *haegeum*, *Hongdae*, *gut*, *pansori*, and *minyo*. As the program title implies, these performances were distinctive in the sense that they only featured female *gugak* performers, who are mostly young. The director Jae-hyun Chun described the program as "focusing on female and their voices." Further, Chun commented on the overarching project "Gugak Talks about the Era" in the program book:

This year marks South Korea's 70th anniversary of the Independence. It is simply not a story of the dominants who ruled others. It is **our story**, the story delivered by *gugak*. ***Gugak* has always communicated with the society**: we have laughed and wept together. It knew when and why to be played. We hope *gugak* would not keep its hands off the era we are living in...Here are the stories about our society presented by sisters who have played *gugak*...We all wish to empathize, share, laugh, and cry with others in this summer. **We believe this is a duty of the art, of music, of**

the nation, and of musicians. We are now living in a difficult time. It was certainly uneasy to prepare this program. #Authentic *gugak*, #Sisters' *Gugak*, #Hot *gugak*, #*Gugak* of the era... These are the main themes for this summer in Namsangol Hanok Village.

The concert titled in Korean *Unni-deul-eui Gugak* literally translates to “Sisters’ Gugak” in English. The use of the word *unni* (“sister”) in the title has a significant role. While audiences are drawn to musical events mostly to satisfy their musical appetites, event titles, being a highly visible source of information, also have significant influence on motivating audience to come. With the rise of fusion or contemporary *gugak* in 1990s, ways of naming *gugak* events also began to change. Compared to those from 1990s, *gugak* events today tend to have more abstract names that may pique people’s curiosity. According to the annual reports of the National Gugak Center (1992, 2015), the majority of event titles in 1991 were obvious, which simply provided the names of performers and their *gugak* genres (e.g. *Dea-seok Jeong’s Geomungo Solo*), whereas nowadays, seemingly abstract, novel, or inspirational words frequently appear in event titles (e.g. *Yu-jin Heo’s Daegeum Solo: Expanding Gaze*). The title “Sisters’ Gugak” went even a step further by concealing performer names and *gugak* genres. Thus, the only words appear in its title are women and *gugak*.

The title was intended to arouse to feelings: familiarity and curiosity. Familiarity came from the word *unni*, a Korean vocabulary refers to an older or a big sister. The origin of the word remains unclear, but it has been frequently used among females to call older relatives or close acquaintances in a respectful and friendly way. The Korean

kinship terminology is particularly complex when compared to those of other cultures. Since the kinship terms are largely based on family hierarchy, most of the terms indicate either gender or age relations, or both. Hence, it is a representation of power relations in the traditionally patriarchal society.

In contemporary women's movement, "the concept of sisterhood has been an important unifying force" (Dill 1983, 131). While *gugak* has been largely associated with motherhood, the concert title clearly leaned more towards the idea of sisterhood. Many feminists have problematized the concept of motherhood as it has become a barrier to female social participation. However, the image of sisterhood implies strengthening female empowerment in politics and reforming ingrained gender roles in society. By using the word sister, the program not only tried to remove long-existed, male-dominant hierarchy in the *gugak* scene but also deliver a message of women empowerment. Most of the audience showed positive responses to the title, using words like "fresh," "impressive," and "surprising," though some criticized it, "it does not really sounds like *gugak*."

Politicizing *Gugak*: From Detached to Attached

By "detaching" themselves from the institutionalized power (Chapter Four), these female artists could politicize *gugak* through their creative works. This resulted in making *gugak* more "attached" to social political issues of the present day, what Appadurai (1996) calls "deterritorialization." They have covered various issues in Korean society that are relevant to a) current socio-politic issues (e.g. Korean sexual

slaves in Imperial Japanese Military, the Sewol ferry disaster, a government-published history textbook), b) women's rights (e.g. domestic violence and sexual assault against females, female marriage immigrants, female prostitutes, misogynists) and c) general human rights (e.g. discriminations against North Korean defectors, LGBTQ communities, and other minority groups).

While there have been constantly activities associated with music or political incidents (or both) in Korean society, female performer's politicization of *gugak* became highly visible after the Sewol ferry disaster on April 16, 2014 and the comfort women agreement in 2015.³⁶ The ferry disaster happened about a year before my fieldwork in Seoul, South Korea. However, despite the time that had already passed, the painful memory and its impacts still lingered in the minds of Korean people, including myself. As reports on the incompetency of the government in handling the disaster itself and its aftermath poured out, rage and sorrow quickly swarmed the nation, and the disaster developed into a political matter. Later on December 28 2015, the comfort women agreement between South Korean and Japan caused another political chaos. Without clear and sincere apology from Japan, the two governments agreed to finish talking about the issue and move on to the future. This ran against the wish of most South Korean people, and caused distrust and discontent against the Korean government and even the nation itself. The term 'Hell Joseon' or 'Hell Korea' became an even more encompassing term, not only symbolizing people's discontent on economic hardships, but the overall situation of the nation.

³⁶ See Pilzer 2012 and 2014 for more information about the Japanese "comfort women."

The Sewol ferry disaster has caused widespread social and political dissatisfaction across South Korea and heightened criticism against the government and the mass media for its dishonesty, incompetency, and irresponsibly. Over 300 people sank under the sea, because they followed the instruction to “stay calm and remain still” in the cabin. Coping with the shocking national tragedy, musicians either expressed their condolences by presenting commemorating performances or cancelling upcoming events. Any cultural events or television shows that appeared inappropriate for the situation were halted for three weeks. In many ways, the halt on various cultural events helped the nation “stay calm and remain still.”

On April 24, an image of a female performer singing to a Korean traditional instrument surrounded by dozens of male police officers was widely distributed through Internet (Figure 4.2). The woman, *gayageum* performer Min-ah Jeong, was performing to protest how the government handled the Seoul ferry disaster. The yellow picket besides her reads:

What can we sing, as such a fragile being?
What would diseased mind want us to sing?
Rotted organs that were neglected and disregarded.
Was revealed by death to us as cancer tumors.
Incompetent government trying to get away from all responsibilities,
Greedy, selfish power and money seeking interest
Even in the moment when people die.
Sewol ferry reveals every single corrupted parts of Korean society.
No nation stands without its people.
We should now gouge this tumor out of our society.
We should now pray for the souls sacrificed in vain,
To reclaim the dignity of those survived,
We urge President Park and her current administration to resign.



Figure 4.2. Jeong’s *gayageum* protest surrounded by police officers.
 Courtesy of C Cloud. <http://cafe.naver.com/ccloudcs/2301>. (accessed April 25, 2014)

The image was surprising enough to capture the public’s attention, since no one had seen such “*gayageum* protest” before. Many comments followed to support and encourage her and some even praised her as a “responsible intellectual.”

More importantly, On May 5 2014, less than a month after the disaster, Min-ah Jeong created an online community with singer-songwriter Sai to organize a collective action. In their website, they explained their purpose and motivations behind their action:

Six performances in total have been canceled. Min-ah Jeong told me that all her scheduled performances were canceled till this July. After this series of cancellations, lying on the floor, it suddenly felt like as if someone commanding me: “You just kept still staying in your room.”

After the tragedy, we are now able to see the reality of South Korea. So far, we have made mistakes in voting, turning away from the powerless suffering from the powerful ... When we were kids, we learned that all we need to do to behave well and follow what adults say, then we will be a great person. Those kids just followed what adults told them, and they died...I am not an intellect, nor a teacher, but a mere countryside musician. However I want to speak out. Let us not stay still. Let us DO something in our own ways. Let us join our power to correct something. Let us at least try. As a musician, I decided to do something I can do. From May 10 to 11, Min-ah Jeong and I will go on a one-man protest or busking. I know world will not change by the mere act of two musicians, or busking even without a proper amplifier. But, WE NEED TO DO SOMETHING. If musicians come out of the closet, saying words they have wanted to speak and busking to protest, I believe it will be at least a way to “remember” things we have lost... Would you please join us?³⁷

About a hundred musicians joined to the protest movement titled ‘Musicians’ Manifesto’ (Figure 4.3), performing relay-style-one-man-protest showing their specialties from May 10 to 11 on a street of Hongdae area. One-man protest first appeared in 2000, since court ruled that the law on people’s assembly and demonstration is applicable on when there

³⁷ *Sewolho-reul jikyeoboneun jageun eumakadeul-eui seoneon* [Musicians’ Manifesto upon the Sewol tragedy]’s Facebook page, accessed May 30, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/musiciansmanifesto/?fref=ts>.

are “more than two people.” One-man protest, therefore, has become the sole means of legally protesting without asking for prior approval.

Over a hundred artists, including musicians, painters, and dancers, voluntarily join this collective action. Local shops also supported the protest by providing chairs for musicians. Some even brought homemade cookies to encourage participants. In addition, more people volunteered making visual images of the protest. These videos and images were instantly distributed throughout social media channels using hashtags: *#Jackeun eumakga seoneon* (Little Musician Manifesto), *#Sewolho* (The Sewol Ferry), and *#Sewolho itjimaseyo* (Don’t Forget the Sewol).



Figure 4.3. Poster of Musicians’ Manifesto. Courtesy of Musicians’ Manifesto.
<https://www.facebook.com/musiciansmanifesto>. (accessed May 15, 2014)

Among various performers protesting, high school students were marching in a parade in complete silence; they not only resembled the victims of the Sewol but also criticized the instruction that caused the deaths, “remain silence, stay still.” Sang-jin Lee also participated in the silent protest while on a bike with a picket. Organizers of the protest encouraged people to participate as they valued individual voices: “This movement has no particular group or people behind it. All participants are our co-organizers. We do not intend to form a single message. Rather, as an individual, we speak out hundreds of statements, to one direction.”³⁸

There were a small number of *gugak* musicians - all female performers except for one male singer - in this the protest performance. Min-ah Jeong, an organizer of the protest, performed some of her works, singing to a *gayageum*. Since protestors were prohibited from using an amplifier, her performance could be heard only from proximity. However, as the protest focused more on “encouraging diverse behavior heading same way,” it was her message that was more important than the actual performance. Besides a *gayageum* performer Min-ah Jeong, there were *pansori* singers like In-hye Park and the group Badaksori. Even though the group performed some of traditional repertoires, (e.g. *Jindo Arirang* (famous folksong from Jindo Island), *Sangyeosori* (Requiem), and *Simbongsa nunddeuneun daemok* (a part from Simcheongjeon, a *pansori* repertoire base on a famous Korean folk tale), the lyrics of *Jindo Arirang* was changed to lament the tragedy:

³⁸ Musicians’ Manifesto’s *Facebook* page, accessed April 5, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/musiciansmanifesto/posts/251168588403935>.

Father, why can't you recognize me? Oh, my dear, my daughter, let's go home.
Our children who wanted to be on a helicopter, now only their souls returning home on it.
Oh, Sewol. Oh, Sewol.³⁹ Please don't leave. Endless desires, halted altogether.
I shouldn't have let you go, I shouldn't have. Why have I sent you on the way, you would never come back.
Deep in the rough waters, Sewol is buried.
Where Sewol buried, our dreams vanished.
Cry. Cry out. Don't stay still, cry and roar.

Based on Feld and Fox (1994), these performances can be understood as “lament stylizations” that “performatively embody and express complex social issues connecting largely...on death, morality, and memory to aesthetic and political thematization of loss and pain, resistance and social reproduction, and to ritual performance of emotion” (39).

More actions inspired by “Musicians’ Manifesto” followed across the nation. Honyang commented, “I am joining the movement in Busan. I am a musician and I will do what I can do. By doing things we can, let’s make the world a better place to live.” Musicians living in Gwanak area, Seoul also joined the movement as they collectively performed every Friday through street performances to “remember and to bring changes.” On May 31, 2014 the Musician Union organized a series of collective protesting performances titled “Musicians’ siege of Gwanghwamun: Again, at Gwanghwamun,” and surrounded Gwanghwamun area, the heart of Seoul, South Korea.

“Musicians’ Manifesto” was a horizontally, democratically structured movement as it formulated collective identity. Scholars have highlighted the significance of emotions and affective ties in collective identity in terms of understanding social

³⁹ “Sewol” refers both the Sewol ferry and “prolonged time” or “time” in Korean.

movements based on the classical theories of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber (Fominaya 2010). The movement further sustained employing “symbolic resources as signifiers of collective identity,” (Fominaya 2010, 396) that is yellow color; people wore yellow ribbons or clothes and colored protest items in yellow. Establishing and identifying collective identity is important not only to draws distinction with other types of identity, but also it remains even after the groups within a movement dissolve (Ibid. 401).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I investigated collective performances or movements of female *gugak* performers, largely based on my summer fieldwork in Seoul 2015. Female *gugak* performers’ relatively autonomous status from the institutionalized power (See Chapter Four) has granted them the freedom and flexibility to address socio-political issues of Korean society. I first examined the performance titled as “Sisters’ Gugak” since it exclusively featured female *gugak* performers, which rarely happens. To put their socio-political performances in larger context, I further explored a series of protest movements that followed after ferry sinking tragedy in April 2014. By conveying political messages through their performances, these female *gugak* performers enable *gugak* to “better capture” or “be better captured” within “contemporary.” Furthermore, it encourages people to reconsider the meaning and the role of music, *gugak*, female, and musicians in the society.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

My personal experience from *gugak* institutions made me aware of the importance of socio-political issues in the music scene, and that awareness piqued my scholarly interest. Images of female body surrounded by male force and performing traditional instrument in the heart of contemporary city led me to think about the dichotomous frameworks. While there have been a significant number of female musicians, *gugak* has been gendered by binary view on performer's roles, music genres, musical instrument, and surrounding environment. This more frequently led to imposing invisible restrictions on female *gugak* performers: what they can or cannot, where they can perform or cannot, how they can be viewed or cannot, etc.

My research, therefore, primarily seeks reasons behind it. Throughout Chapter Two, I reviewed how the female body has become "docile bodies." By exploring the intertwined relationship of hegemonic power and female body, I pointed out how traditional gender normativity has been established, reinforced, and solidified. In addition, the chapter further explained how *gugak* has been exploited by the dominant power to spread and legitimize ruling ideologies. As *gugak* became more institutionalized, more gendered boundaries emerged, which become internalized in female body.

In Chapter Three and Four, I focused on female performers who have "voice," or "female language," as writing and performing music. To answer how these performers have identified and negotiated their identities and how they have re-created, re-formed

and re-presented gender identity, I viewed their voice as a form of autonomy and resistance. By examining their musical practices and career, I argued that their voice has empowered female bodies, been a vehicle for agency, and created new power dynamics. These female *gugak* performers have blurred gendered boundaries and transformed the meaning of female identity. To them, *gugak* became a means of empowerment that helps them to challenge dominant gender norms.

In Chapter Five, I presented a close analysis of collective performances and examined their role in socio-political context. By doing so, I illustrated their enthusiasm for recapturing contemporary in *gugak*. I intentionally use the word “recapture” here to stress *gugak* once possessed it in the past. As I further explored their struggles to “capture” contemporary, I discussed how they re-create, re-define, and re-present their identities in relation to the idea of contemporary. Various tactics and identities can be found from dis-labeling or re-labeling themselves. Their musical identities arose from different frames, including world music, modern *gugak*, kinetic Korean music, crossover band, or contemporary *gugak*, or JUST MUSIC.

My intention was not to name few “great musicians” over others. Rather, I tried to highlight important-yet-underrepresent issues in the *gugak* scene, gender and power. In between Chapter Two and Three, gender normativity and performativity, one could find the gap. I will argue that *gugak*, for these female performers, is neither a mere reflection of past or present, nor an embodiment of the dominant. Rather, it is a means to deconstruct gendered boundaries, to reestablish and enhance female’s role in *gugak*, and to close the gaps between *gugak* and the contemporary society: reclaiming contemporary.

Just as gender, identity, and performativity are always in socio-political context, always in process, their music should be understood a matter of “becoming.”

Although I have tried to carefully address gender issues in the *gugak* scene throughout this thesis, my research has limitations and shortcomings that need to be addressed in further studies. First of all, as I chose broad phenomena for my research subject, gender issues in Korean *gugak* scene, more time and effort need to be directed in order to analyze each case in-depth. Furthermore, my thesis only focuses on female musicians who have received extensive training through music institutions. Therefore, non-elite *gugak* musicians or male *gugak* musicians’ voice should also be investigated and respected for more detailed analysis.

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APPENDIX

ORTHOGRAPHY AND TRANSLATION

All translations from Korean to English are my own unless otherwise noted. Romanization for Korean words in this thesis follows the official revised Romanization of Korean system established by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Republic of Korea in 2000. Some, including names and publication titles, follow the author's original use and preference of the McCune-Reischauer Romanization system. For instance, Korean traditional music is romanized "*gugak*" according to the revised romanization system, but written "*kugak*" under the McCune-Reischauer Romanization system. Regardless of the system, all Korean words are italicized except for names of persons, places, performance groups and organizations. Brief English translations of Korean words are provided in brackets, if necessary.

In terms of person or group names, I also follow the official system unless he/she already provided their names in English. Unlike the standard order in Korean names, where family names come before given names, all names follow the Western convention, given names followed by family names. Since the usage of hyphen in given names is varied even among one's works, Korean authors' given names in the references page are all hyphenated in order to prevent any confusion (e.g. Jeongin Lee in the text and Jeong-in Lee in the reference page). The usage of hyphenated or separated first name should not be taken as an indication of middle name.