

# TRANSNATIONALIZATION, PARTICULARIZATION AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN COURT CEREMONIAL MUSIC OF EAST ASIA: YAYUE, AAK AND GAGAKU

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## **ABSTRACT**

In his discussion on the contemporary global music scenes, Trimillios (2009) defined transnationalization as “music whose production and creation take place in a number of national states, a condition that has major implications for national identity, ownership and cultural rights.” Although the use of advanced technology demarcates contemporary transnationalization, music has been continually moving across the borders in the history. Particularly, ancient ceremonial music of Chinese dynasties was eagerly learned and adopted by people in other Asian countries. It became the essential repertoire of court music of Korea (ku gak), Vietnam (nha nhac) and Japan (gagaku), which officially represent the “national” music of the three countries today. This consequently coincided with the complex process of creating the national identity of music, in which the constructed national music tradition inherently embraced foreignness within it. This lecture focuses on music of guzheng of China and koto of Japan. The prototype of the instrument was introduced from China to Japan in the 7th century CE together with other gagaku instruments, and later independently

developed into the two music traditions with clear national identities. The lecture discusses the issues of transnationalization, ancient as well as contemporary, and particularization of guzheng and koto through live performances. It features Ms. Liu “Christina” Xiao Fang, guzheng player and the Chinese Director of Confucius Institute at Ateneo de Manila University.

**Keywords:** *Transnationalization, Chinese ceremonial music, yayue, aak, and gagaku*

**T**ransnationalization of music is defined as “music whose production and creation take place in a number of nation-states, a condition that has major implications for national identity, ownership, and cultural rights” (Trimillos, 2009, p. 9). According to this definition, transnationalization of music is not characteristic of the contemporary modern world but it has incessantly occurred along with the emergence of the history of states. In East Asia, ceremonial music of ancient China played a crucial role in the establishment of national music of its surrounding countries. Chinese music of *yayue* spread to Vietnam, Korea and Japan. It later became the distinctive music tradition of these countries: respectively *nhã nhạc*, *aak* and *gagaku*, which were originally all in the same scripts 雅樂, literally, elegant or refined music. It was not the simple transmission of a cultural expression from the dominant center to its peripheral areas but the process that entailed implications for national identity and cultural claims.

This paper attempts to discuss the transnationalization of *yayue* in Korea and Japan, and illustrate the establishment of national identity in music of the two countries and foreignness within it.

### **Yayue: Chinese ceremonial music**

While music of worship and rituals had existed in China, it was in the Western Zhou (1046–256 BC) that ceremonial music was established as a distinctive genre of *yayue* by the Duke of Zhou. With the politico-religious nature of the dynasty, the music was never popularized but remained in the court and the ruling class. According to Jin, it entailed a set of systematic social rules and codes of conduct, and the articulated pedagogy that entailed music morals, music languages and music dances. Special organizations were formed to standardize and manage music dances, which were part of feasts and sacrificial rites.

Rigidity was one of the characteristics of this music. Officials could only retain music dance groups that were equivalent to their ranks in feast entertainment. The types and numbers of musical instruments, lines and numbers of dance groups, as well as categories and numbers of musicians for the kings, nobles, and officials were strictly enforced and could not be mixed (2010, pp. 12-13).

The Zhou dynasty set the theory of 12 *lus* 律 (scales). Under this theory, the twelve tones were arranged at intervals of semitone within an octave using not the system of temperament but the principle of the *sanfen sunyi* (三分損益法). The pentatonic scale was established as well, known as *gong*, *shang*, *jue*, *zhi* and *yu* (major, 2<sup>nd</sup>-major, 2<sup>nd</sup>-minor, 3<sup>rd</sup>-major, 3<sup>rd</sup>-minor) (Wang, 2007). Ho and

Han suggested that *yayue* was based on a heptatonic scale in 770 BC: the addition of *bianzhi* (augmented 4<sup>th</sup>) and *biangong* (major 7<sup>th</sup>). According to them, *Bianzhi* was not treated a temporary ornamental tone but an essential element in formulating musical content, which caused so much effect (1982, p. 136). With these non-pentatonic two pitches, the *yayue* repertoire had a distinctive sound, particularly different from folk musics that were usually pentatonic.

The period also saw the formation of the eight-sound classification of instruments: gold/metal (bronze bells and metallophones), stone (lithophones), earth/clay (ceramic aerophones), leather (drums), wood (wooden percussion instruments), bamboo (flutes), gourd (free reed moth organs) and silk (zithers).

Ancient Chinese ceremonial music took the form of an ensemble with a set of *qing* and chime bells. Sets of 65-piece chime bells were discovered in the tomb of Marquis Yi, the noble of the Warring States period of the Zhou dynasty, together with flutes and zithers (Falkenhausen, 1993). Quoting from the study of I Li in 1917, Han and Gray discussed that the ceremonial orchestra of the Western Zhou consisted of two big bronze bells (*bo*), two bronze bells (*zhong*), three big drums (*jiangu*), two small drums (*pi*), one hand drum (*tao*), two stone chimes (*qing*), four zithers (*se*), and three mouth organs (*sheng* and *tang*). Idiophones and membranophones dominated the pre-Shang orchestras; next in importance were aerophones, and during the Han dynasty (206 BC-220 AD) the court orchestra showed similar patterns of instrumentation with a slight increase of aerophones and chordophones (1979, p. 2).

The Sui dynasty (589–618) and the Tang dynasty (618–907) were marked by political stability within the country and economic development. Through trade and military campaigns, the dynasties expanded contact with and interest in other areas of Asia and Middle East. Rulers of the time adopted open cultural policies that recognized the music of ethnic groups in the territory and foreign influences, and integrated them under the official framework. The political attention brought about the flourishing of music culture (Jin, 2010, p. 24). Music of these periods further developed music theory.

Qiuci music was introduced from Central Asia (particularly, Eastern Turkistan) during the Sui and Tang period and it affected the creation of 84 modulations. Theoretically, in the chromatic 12 tone scale, each tone generates seven heptatonic modes with a total of 84 modes. Ho and Han said that since musical instruments in those days were constructed more simply, they were not able to execute so many modes in reality (1982, p. 136). The theory of 28 modulations of yanyue (court banquet music, literally, music of Yan) also appeared, which was heptatonic with quingjiao (perfect 4th) and run (minor 7th).

During the Tang dynasty, the court had nine ensembles, representing music from throughout Asia (Benn, 2002, p.134). Different genres for various audiences were created, and several institutions of music management and education were established. Taichang Temple (Taoism) had the supreme authority in the preservation and education of ritual music. The Guchui Institute was in charge of military music of drums and winds, while the Dayue Institute was a music education organization for yayue and yanyue musicians (Jin, 2010, p. 25).

During North Song Dynasty (960-1126), *Dashengfu*, a musical institution that existed from 1105 to 1125, was responsible for examining ancient music. It revised music theory and tunes, and created new series of *yayue* to meet the political needs of the time (Long, 2009). *Yayue* was thus preserved and reproduced, corresponding not to the popularity and public demands for entertainment but to political interventions. Jones argued that *yayue* was a term used to refer to the large ensembles for state rituals for the whole two millennia from the pre-imperial period until 1911(1996, p. 384). It had possibly undergone the modification and transformation in its history. While it survived for two millennia due to its unique position to state rituals and the institutionalization, the tradition of *yayue* virtually came to an end with the fall of the Qing Dynasty in 1912 when the imperial court and its ceremonies were abolished.

### **Aak: Korean ceremonial music**

Although the Korean Peninsula was continuously influenced by Chinese music, the extraordinary institutional transmission of Chinese court music occurred in 1114 and 1116. During King Munjong's reign (1046-1082), Korean and Chinese music were played at state banquets by a string and wind orchestra, *kwanhyōnbang*. The court began observing Confucian rites to heaven, agriculture, land and grain, and royal ancestors, and looked to China for suitable music for them. Responding to Korea's music quest, the Chinese Song emperor Huizong sent a gift of *dazheng xinyue*, music for banquets, in 1114, consisting of 167 instruments, scores, and illustrated instructions for performance. The second gift

of *dasheng yayue*, music for rituals, in 1116 included 428 instruments together with costumes and ritual dance objects. It was first performed in October 1116 in front of the Korean king (Howard, 2001, p. 983). The gifts from China were managed by two court music offices of the Koryo dynasty (918-1392): *Taeakso*, the Office for Great Music, and *Chonakso*, the Office for Ritual Music. Province argued the yayue instruments and music sent in 1116, which Dasheng Institute of the Northern Song dynasty was responsible for, remained in use in the Korean court ceremonial music, and this is the origin of the Korean tradition of aak (1992, p. 92 and p. 95). While yayue in China did not entail the inevitable association with particular religions, aak in Korea was only performed for sacrificial rites of Confucianism.

According to Province, the aak orchestra is divided into two sections that perform in alternation: the Terrace Ensemble (*taingga*) positioned on the stone porch of a shrine building, and the Courtyard Ensemble (*hon'ga*) at the far end of the courtyard fronting the shrine building. When state sacrificial rites are executed, the Terrace Ensemble plays music in keys corresponding to *yin* in the ancient Confucian dualism, alternating sections with the Courtyard Ensemble, which performs in *yang* keys. The instruments of the Ensembles number nearly 600 including many large sets of tuned bronze bells and stone chimes as well as mouth organs, flues percussion instruments, five kinds of long zither, and 32 singers (1992, p. 91).

This music tradition died after the end of the Kyoryo dynasty in 1392, and the deliberate effort revived it in the 15<sup>th</sup> century under the Kingdom of Joseon that unified the territory of current Korea on the

foundation of Confucian doctrines. The state rites were divided into four categories. Among them, the category of *chungsa* (medium rites) contained the sacrifice to Confucius, which *aak* was played for. According to Howard, under the Music Supervising Institute, 297 musicians and two directors were employed for ritual music and 518 musicians and two directors for other music in 1471. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, there was a record of 519 musicians employed by the Court Music Department (2001, p. 983).

Toward the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Korea gradually became a Japanese colony, losing previous ties with China, and court music declined. The musicians and administrators of the court music department decreased. Only 40 musicians and administrators were left in the department in 1922 when the royal family and the court could not sustain the department any longer (Howard, 2001, p. 983). After WWII, a presidential decree in 1950 proclaimed the establishment of the National Classical Music Institute in order to preserve traditional music and dance ensembles. The National Gugak Center was formed in 1950, which was responsible for the preservation and promotion of court music including *aak*. Under the center, the ownership of *aak* was officially transferred from the royal family to the nation-state of Korea. *Aak* is now considered as part of *gugak*, the contemporary construct of national music of Korea.

Hwang said that the Chinese theory of *yayue* was accepted into Korean court music nearly intact in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The Chinese concepts of *yin* and *yang* were embodied in the composition and repertoires of the two ensembles of *taingga* and *hon'ga*. The form of *aak* that remains up to date is, however, a 15<sup>th</sup> century construct as well as the outcome of incessant reproduction for more than five



centuries. Hwang continued his argument by saying that the Korean aak has developed outside the Chinese theory and form (1978, p. 33). Province also suggested that the present day performance of aak contains the Korean innovation, and the modern performance style is all Korean rather than Chinese (1992, p. 112).

### **Gagaku: Japanese court music**

Gagaku, the oldest surviving music in Japan, was established adopting music of various countries in Asia, such as Korea, China, Vietnam, India and the Middle East.

Korean music influence was probably the earliest importation to gagaku. The transmission of Chinese court music occurred between 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries when Japan frequently dispatched envoys to China to acquire information in other Asian countries and culture of the Sui and Tang dynasty. The first recorded delegation was sent to China in 600 during the Sui Dynasty. The Japanese court continued sending more than 23 missions of diplomats and scholars until 894. Malm argued that the Imperial Music Bureau, established in 701, was mostly filled with Tang musicians at that time (1959, p. 78). Kibino Makibi (695-771), a notable Japanese scholar and bureaucrat, was part of a mission to Tang China in 716. He stayed in China for 18 years, and played a major role in the importation of Chinese Buddhism, Confucianism, astronomy, military science as well as music and instruments. Between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> century, the wide range of gagaku repertoire was given structure and standardized, and the foreign music pieces were classified into two main categories: *komagaku* 高麗樂 (also called “music of the right”) and *togaku* 唐樂

(“music of the left”). Komagaku included the imported repertoire from Korea, Manchuria and the Middle East and new compositions influenced by them while togaku included musics from China, India and Vietnam. Togaku appeared in the technical categories of *kangen*, the instrumental ensemble, and *bugaku*, dance music (Kishibe, 1982, p. 33).

Kangen and bugaku are based on a tone system of court music of the Tang dynasty: a chromatic scale, two heptatonic scales, called *ryo* and *ritsu*, and six modes called *rokuchoshi*. The *ryo* scale is similar to the scale Ho and Han (1979) called *yanyue* while the *ritsu* scale, with the distinctive pitch of minor 3<sup>rd</sup>, is neither the *yanyue* nor *yayue* scale. If the music theory of the Tang dynasty would be applied, twelve modes can be produced in each scale, the Japanese *rokushoshi* has only three: *Ichikotsucho* (D), *Sojo* (G) and *Tashikicho* (E) in the *ryo* scale; and *Hyojo* (E), *Oshikicho* (A) and *Banshikicho* (B) in the *ritsu* scale.

Retaining Shinto as its indigenous religion, the Japanese court during the Nara period (710-792) established the government system based on Buddhist ideology. Unlike Korean *aak*, togaku did not entail the association with Confucianism. Furthermore, the category of togaku music lost its religious implication at all for the court ceremonial music had its origin in indigenous music due to its relation with Shinto. Buddhism had its own music category of *syomo*, Buddhist chanting. Malm argued that Chinese music found in gagaku seems to have been originally developed as banquet music rather than for ceremonial purposes (1959, p. 78).

Historically, the 10<sup>th</sup>-century form of gagaku declined as the seat of power shifted from the court to the warrior class. It nearly died out

for a hundred years between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century. By the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century when the foundation of the early modern state of Japan was set by the Tokugawa Shogunate, the surviving musicians were officially organized into three groups, and later a new group was formed for the shogun. After the shogunate was abolished and the imperial system was restored in 1867, the Music Bureau, the Ministry of the Imperial Household was established in 1908 under the Meiji government. It selected and standardized the gagaku repertoire, and published the Meiji Selection of Gagaku. The present gagaku repertoire is limited to some 100 pieces mainly from the Meiji Selection though it seems that more than 1,000 pieces existed in the past. The size of the ensemble was also reduced in comparison with the 10<sup>th</sup> century form. The Imperial Treasury of Shosoin preserves 19 kinds of instruments of the year 752, which include a transverse flute, a double-reed flute, zithers, lutes, a harp, a mouth organ, percussion instruments and gong-chimes. The present gagaku ensemble, on the other hand, contains only eight kinds of instruments, which do not include a set of qing and chime bells, formally played by 16 musicians.

Today, the Department of Music of the Imperial Household Agency is in charge of preservation and performance of gagaku. It defines gagaku as the music repertoire played by the department except the Western pieces. Unlike aak of Korea whose ownership was transferred from the royal family to the nation-state, gagaku remains to be refined music for the imperial household and Shinto shrines. The mass had already had the genre of *hogaku*, Japanese music, in contrast to *yogaku*, Western music. The average Japanese have almost no opportunity to see the gagaku performance in their everyday life. Nonetheless, as the Japanese Constitution states that the emperor is the symbol of Japan as well as the symbol of the unity

of Japanese people, gagaku constitutes an indispensable part of national music tradition of Japan.

### **The construction of national music and embedded foreignness**

Trimillos proposed four universal categories for defining the transnational:

- 1) its production takes place in locales outside the homeland,
- 2) it has created its own performance setting,
- 3) it has in-country arrangers and composers, and
- 4) its participants are in-country residents and not necessarily of the heritage associated with the tradition's provenance (2009, p. 27).

As the overview of aak and gagaku shows, Chinese court ceremonial music was reproduced and newly produced in the two countries in the setting of their court and history, underwent standardization, production and education through the bureaucratic system. It is said that aak and togaku keep the ancient repertoire of yayue that was lost in China today.

Chinese ceremonial music was transmitted with political and institutional interventions, and was integrated into, and consequently constructed, the music traditions of the respective countries. While aak and gagaku almost died out in the history, they revived at the time of the formation of the nation-state: the Kingdom of Joeson in Korea and the Tokugawa Shogunate in Japan. These music were never popularized and kept exclusively to the court and the ruling class in a rigidly fixed format, indicating strong political implications.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they were re-situated in the modern nation-state building and became to be the representations of national music. Their cultural identity and claim is unmistakable. Nonetheless, the Chinese origin, substantiated or perceived, is always acknowledged by the musicians and the knowledgeable audience, and aak and gagaku, continuously reproduce foreignness within them. Etenraku, for instance, is one of the gagaku pieces that are most frequently performed nowadays, and its variations are incessantly produced by contemporary composers. The original piece is believed to be composed by Emperor Wen or General Zhang Liang of the Han Dynasty (206 BC-220 AD) though no record was found. Aak and gagaku enclose a history of the transnationalization of Chinese court ceremonial music, which is necessitated for its authenticity and legitimation as ancient court music. Thus national music of Korea and Japan deeply embraces foreignness as its essential part while presenting undoubtedly their respective cultural identity.

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**Editor's note**

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