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Yoonjah Choi

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**Gendered Practices and Conceptions in Korean Drumming:  
On the Negotiation of “Femininity” and “Masculinity” by Korean Female Drummers**

by

**Yoonjah Choi**

**A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Music in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York**

**2014**

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**This manuscript has been read and accepted for the  
Graduate Faculty in Music in satisfaction of the  
dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.**

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## **Abstract**

Gendered Practices and Conceptions in Korean Drumming:  
On the Negotiation of “Femininity” and “Masculinity” by Korean Female Drummers

by

Yoonjah Choi  
Ph.D. in Ethnomusicology

Advisor: Professor Jane Sugarman

Korean drumming, one of the most popular musical practices in South Korea, currently exists in a state of contradiction as drumming, historically performed by men, is increasingly practiced by women. Women drummers who enter this male-dominated realm confront the “masculinization” of the practice, which is naturalized and normalized through the field’s discourse and performance. At the same time, they seek a “femininity” that may help them to survive in the field. To examine these gendered conceptions and practices, I draw on the ways in which contemporary Korean traditional drum performers, predominantly professional female drummers, conceptualize, experience, perform, reinforce, and/or resist issues of gender in the field.

My study presupposes that musical practices embody the underlying structures—shared meanings, values, and ideologies—that characterize a society, and that individuals both reinforce and challenge those structures through those practices. Based on the hypothesis that the supposed “masculinity” and “femininity” in drumming are constructed within the historical context of Confucianism, nationalism, and commercialization (in particular via mass media), I approach Korean drumming as a site in which gender conceptions are internalized, idealized, embodied, contested, or challenged by performers. To assess the state of women in Korean drumming, I pose the following questions: What kind of sociocultural environment encourages

women's involvement in Korean drumming? How has drumming been historically constructed as male, and to what extent does this naturalize men as drummers and exclude women? Taking into consideration that both masculinity and femininity are influenced by such historical structures, how do women drummers negotiate between expressing the "masculinity" central to drumming culture and performing qualities typically categorized as "feminine"? In answering these questions within the discussion of "masculinity" and "femininity," women's bodies emerge as the focus.

My research is predominantly based on interactions with professional drummers, through interviews and participant-observation. These drummers include primarily women but also men, and are involved in a variety of drumming styles including *pungmul* (percussion ensemble practice), *samulnori* (a modernized version of *pungmul*), and contemporary genres, as well as the drumming accompaniment in such genres as *pansori* (a theatrical play of story-telling and singing) and shaman rituals. Through assessing and analyzing the discourse and experiences contained within this material, my exploration of Korean drumming, a historically male musical domain increasingly populated by women, may shed light on similar processes both in historical male realms of other regions and in capitalist societies emphasizing "femininity" within consumer culture.

## Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to mention the love and support I received from family and friends in Korea. The very existence of my mother and father has motivated me to work on and finish this dissertation. My three older sisters and friends in Korea have cheered me on during the process, and helped me get out of ruts.

I would like to express my gratitude to those who helped with the writing process. I am grateful for the advice from and encouragement of Prof. Jane Sugarman. She gave me positive responses to my research, and critical and meticulous comments on my writing, both enhancing my motivation and confidence about the work. I also thank all the committee members who read and gave valuable comments on my dissertation—Profs. Peter Manuel, Emily Wilbourne, and Andy Sutton. I would like to thank my primary editor Rebekka Gold for the work on my writing, and my colleagues in the Graduate Center Ethnomusicology program who offered their help with my writing as well.

I am tremendously grateful to the many people who have helped with and been part of this work. My dissertation would not be possible without the contributions of the performers who shared their opinions and ideas with me in interviews. In particular, I would like to single out primary collaborators with whom I interacted the most: Park Eunha, Yim Mijoung, Oh Hyun-ju, Shin Heeyeon, and Yu Kyung-Hwa. I also appreciate the Korean scholars who provided guidance and introductions to some performers—Lee Bohyung, Chae Hyun Kyung, Kim Heesun, Kwon Do Hee, Kim Sejung, and Ha Juyong. Deborah Wong and Nathan Hesselink graciously shared their experiences and perspectives on Korean drumming with me.

This research was possible through institutes who provided me with funding and resources. The CUNY Graduate Center Gilleece Fellowship and additional funds for travel made it possible for me to conduct field research. The Korean Cultural Service New York

allowed me to access their considerable resources, including books, CDs, and DVDs related to Korean culture, as well as the electronic database of the National Assembly Library of the Republic of Korea. The National Gugak Center and Gugak Broadcasting System provided me with their own publications and recordings related to traditional music. I thank SamulNori Hanullim, Inc. and Prof. Yoon Yeochang of Seoul National University for sharing their private publications *SamulNori: SamulNori Hanullim tansaeng samsip junyeon ginyeom* [SamulNori: Commemoration of SamulNori's 30th Anniversary] and *Dure sasimnyeon* [Forty Years of Dure], respectively. Finally, the *gugak* department of Seoul National University and the *yeonhui* department of Korean National University of Arts (Hanyejong) graciously provided me with statistical data on their student body.



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## Notes on Romanization of Korean

In this dissertation, I generally follow the romanization system for Korean established by the Korean government, instead of the McCune-Reischauer system dominant in the U.S. academy. For example, the Korean word “가야금” for a six-stringed plucked zither will be written “gayageum,” although the McCune-Reischauer system would use “kayagŭm.” As there are many ways to romanize names of Korean people, I follow the English renderings that certain Korean scholars and performers use for themselves, e.g. Kim Duk Soo [김덕수 Gim Deoksu] and Oh Hyun-ju [오현주 O Hyeonju]; if certain historical figures have English renderings that are more common than others, those are followed, e.g. Park Chung Hee [Bak Jeonghui]. Otherwise, I have rendered given names based on the Korean government system, and family names in the mode most common among Koreans and generally recognized by non-Koreans. For example, the last name “김” is “Kim,” rather than the system-based “Gim”; “이” is “Lee,” rather than “I” (pronounced ē); “박” is “Park,” rather than “Bak”; “신” is “Shin,” rather than “Sin”; and “최” is “Choi,” rather than “Choe.” The word “희” that is often used in given names is “Hee,” rather than the system-based “Hui.”

Korean names are written with the family name preceding the given name. The words in the Glossary are typically according to the government system.

## **Chapter I: Introduction**

Korean drumming is everywhere in today's South Korea. It is taught in diverse educational spaces, performed in concert halls and outdoor festivals by professionals and amateurs, presented in traditional forms and new compositions, disseminated by mass media, and used to accompany theater and dance performances. Significantly, women's involvement in drumming, a historically male musical domain, has expanded greatly since the 1990s: amateur drumming ensembles composed of married women have formed throughout the country, and female college students major in Korean drumming at an equal ratio to male students. Nevertheless, a discrepancy remains on the professional stage, where women drummers are rarely seen. While some women drummers I have encountered assert that "whether [they are] a woman or a man does not matter to [them] anymore," they consistently confront varying degrees of difficulty as women performers due to the prevailing "masculine" culture, and thus seek and develop strategies of resistance to gendered biases.

My study presupposes that musical practices embody the underlying structures—shared meanings, values, and ideologies—that characterize a society, and that individuals both reinforce and challenge those structures through those same practices. Korean drumming, as one of the most popular musical practices in contemporary Korean society, thus becomes a site where its historical construction as "masculine" not only affects women drummers, but is also confronted and negotiated by them. This study examines the contradictions, confrontations, and negotiations that inform Korean drumming from a gender perspective. I pose three guiding questions: What kind of sociocultural environment encourages women's involvement in Korean drumming? How has drumming been historically constructed as male, and to what extent does this naturalize drummers as male and exclude women? Taking into consideration that both

masculinity and femininity are influenced by such historical structures as Confucianism, nationalism, and commercialization (in particular via the mass media), how do women drummers negotiate between expressing the “masculinity” central to drumming culture and performing qualities typically categorized as “feminine”?<sup>1</sup> To address these issues, I analyze gendered conceptions and practices that drummers internalize, reinforce, or resist; I further examine discourses of Korean drumming that naturalize those conceptions and practices. My observations stem from interactions, through interviews and participant-observation, with women and men involved in various drumming practices including *pungmul* (percussion ensemble practice), *samulnori* (a modernized version of *pungmul*), and contemporary drumming styles, as well as accompanying drumming in such genres as *pansori* (a theatrical play of story-telling and singing) and shaman rituals.

## Korean Drumming

Throughout this dissertation, I use the term “Korean drumming” to embrace the many different drumming genres and styles of accompanying drumming featuring Korean percussion instruments. However, since *pungmul/samulnori* is the most popularly practiced genre, “Korean drumming” has a tendency to refer to *pungmul/samulnori*.<sup>2</sup> Figure I-1 shows a contemporary

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<sup>1</sup> The terms “feminine” and “masculine” refer to a narrow conception of what women and men are supposed to do and be according to gendered stereotypes, rather than embracing all the possibilities of what women and men do and are. This will be discussed further later in the chapter.

<sup>2</sup> *Samulnori* developed from *pungmul*. In general terms, *samulnori* is typically played by a small group (less than ten performers) in a sitting position, whereas *pungmul* is performed by a big group (more than twenty-five) in a standing position, with performers wearing *sangmo* (spinning-tasseled hat). However, *samulnori* performance sometimes includes a repertoire using standing position and *sangmo*. Although the first-generation players began as percussion quartets, in many *samulnori* performances, particularly by amateurs, more than one person will play a particular instrument. Often, the terms “*pungmul*” and “*samulnori*” are used interchangeably by the public; this misunderstanding arose partly because the public came to associate ensemble drumming practices with *samulnori* as it became popular in the 1980s.

drumming group performing *samulnori pangut* with the standard percussion instruments—*ggwaenggwari* (small gong; often called *soe*), *jing* (big gong), *janggu* (hourglass-shaped drum), *buk* (barrel drum), wearing *sangmo*—as well as *taepyeongso* (conical double-reed).<sup>3</sup> As seen here, *pangut*, as a *pungmul* repertoire for entertainment, is generally performed in standing position. In drumming genres such as *pungmul* and *samulnori*, and in certain shaman rituals, a group of performers play percussion instruments; solo performers play *janggu* or *buk* in professional musical genres such as *sanjo* (improvisation-based instrumental solo) and *pansori*. Drumming frequently accompanies other performing arts as well, including court music, folk song, dance performance, and masked dance.



**Figure I-1:** Noreum Machi, playing *samulnori pangut* with *jing*, *janggu*, *buk*, *ggwaenggwari* (from left to right) and *taepyeongso* (back) © Noreum Machi

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<sup>3</sup> *Sogo* (small drum) is another important percussion instrument played in *pungmul* and often in *samulnori pangut*.

Korean drumming has long been an essential part of communal, agricultural, religious, and entertainment life in Korean society, performed in contexts such as village rituals, shaman rituals, music and dance performances of professional musicians, and performances by itinerant entertainment troupes. It has been transformed over time by professionalization, nationalism, commercialization, and extensive educational practice.

During the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910), percussion ensemble practice, called *pungmul*, was performed outdoors by groups of men to promote village rituals, aid labor efficiency, and provide entertainment for village members. However, women from the lowest classes played drums—and even then in limited contexts—for certain shamanic and Buddhist rituals, and as entertainment (Kwon Do Hee 2001). From the late nineteenth through the mid-twentieth century, however, Korean musical culture changed dramatically in response to the introduction of new forms of entertainment, Japanese colonialism (1910-45), and the disruptions of the Korean War (1950-53). As drumming became decontextualized from traditional ritual and agricultural contexts, it was professionalized and developed as entertainment. At the same time, female musicians began to explore traditionally male musical genres; from the late 1950s to the late 1970s, dozens of *yeoseong nongakdan* (female drumming troupes) composed of teenaged girls emerged, generally formed, managed, and trained by men. Nonetheless, while those women performers were involved in drumming in the entertainment realm, they continued to be excluded from drumming for village rituals (Kweon Eun-Yeoung 2003).

In the latter part of the twentieth century, the development of Korean drumming has been influenced by nationalism, modernization, and transnationalism. In the late 1960s, the Korean government designated several regional *pungmul* as “Important Intangible Cultural Heritages” (*jungyo muhyeong munhwajae*), with the intention of reinforcing state power and nation-building

by appealing to shared national traditions.<sup>4</sup> Likewise, in the 1980s, political activists, typically college students and intellectuals, promoted *pungmul*, masked dance, and folk songs as forms of cultural nationalism (Howard 1999). This period also saw the rise of *samulnori*, a modernized version of *pungmul* adapted for stage performance, which particularly appealed to younger generations in urban and transnational settings. Subsequently, a great number of professional drumming groups formed, most not only performing traditional drumming but also creating new styles; these new styles sometimes incorporate foreign percussion instruments and are often geared toward the commercial and international market. Furthermore, as the general public's interest in Korean drumming has increased, the educational system for drumming has expanded, and with it, exposure to the practice of drumming for groups to whom it was traditionally unavailable.

Korean drumming has been researched by many Korean music scholars and ethnomusicologists, both Koreans and non-Koreans. Korean scholars have contributed many analyses of the rhythmic patterns found in the repertoires of *pungmul*, shamanic drumming, and accompanying drumming. The most prominent scholar in this area, Lee Bohyung, has covered many aspects of Korean music in general as well (Lee Bohyung 1986; Lee Bohyung 2003). Some scholars focus on non-musical components such as theatrical play, choreography, and “performance” in *pungmul* (Jeong Byeongho 2009; Kim Ikdu 2009; Yang Jinseong 2008); others take historical and philosophical approaches to *pungmul* and examine its contexts—ritual, labor, and education (Min Miran 2010; Shin Yongha 2009; Song Woo-Seong 2009).

Ethnomusicologists trained outside of Korea often present detailed ethnographic research on

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<sup>4</sup> Since the early 1960s, Important Intangible Cultural Heritages have been designated for forms of music, dance, ritual, and craftsmanship that are valuable from historical, academic, and artistic perspectives. This will be discussed further in Chapter II.

specific regional drumming practices (Hesselink 2008; Howard 1989). Others explore the role of drumming in defining Korean identity and community-building (Donna Kwon 2001; Park Shingil 2000) and examine *pungmul/samulnori* in sociopolitical and transnational settings (Katherine In-Young Lee 2012). Rarely do these writings—whether in Korean or English—consider gender perspectives, however, excepting two scholars writing on mid-twentieth century *yeoseong nongakdan* (Kim Seontae 2004; Kweon Eun-Yeoung 2003; Kweon Eun-Yeoung 2008a).

In general, gender studies in Korean music scholarship, particularly in the field of *gugak* (lit. national music; used more as traditional music), are marginalized—even as gender studies in Korean scholarship have become “mainstream” in terms of becoming a common approach used in many fields. Studies on women musicians often concentrate on the topic of *gisaeng*, Korean courtesans (Kwon Do Hee 2001; Lee Byong Won 1979; Pilzer 2006)<sup>5</sup>; there have also been some studies on women in rock music and composition from a gender perspective (Kang Jeongim 2005; Kim Heejeong 2001). It seems to me that gender studies in traditional Korean music is still in its infancy. Recent dissertations (Jang Hee Sun 2012; Mueller 2013) and an MA thesis (Kim Jungwon 2012) have dealt with women performers in the *gugak* field: Jang Hee Sun traces women performer’s activities from the late nineteenth century to the 1990s based on historical documents; Mueller examines the gender representation in *gugak*, documenting whether there is any gender shift in *gugak* genres over time and explaining such cases in relation to sociocultural transformations in Korean society; Kim Jungwon offers case studies on a few

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<sup>5</sup> *Gisaeng* in the Joseon Dynasty generally entertained men by singing, dancing, and playing instruments. There was a hierarchy among *gisaeng*: *ginyeo* worked for the government or the upper class; *sampae*, who emerged in the late Joseon Dynasty, entertained the petit-bourgeois and the lower class (Kwon Do Hee 2002). At the turn of the twentieth century, *ginyeo* who belonged to the government disbanded, even as *sampae* expanded (Kwon Do Hee 2003). *Gisaeng* guilds (*gwonbeon*) formed as *sampae* became concentrated in the Seoul area during the Japanese colonial period (ibid.).

females fusion *gugak* groups in relation to national identity, motherly roles, and sexualization. Since Jang Hee Sun and Mueller broadly survey the *gugak* genres, their discussion of Korean drumming generally depends on historical documents and other literature rather than their own field research. My dissertation thus deepens their research by focusing on Korean drumming with an emphasis on field research.

## **Drumming and Gender**

My interest in studying music as intersecting with gender is recent. In college I read some Western feminist literature and was advised by a professor that a gender studies approach could be academically advantageous in the United States. My interest in Korean drumming from a gender perspective began when I took a required course, “Women and Music,” and examined women playing drums in cross-cultural settings. As a student at Wesleyan University, I saw female students learning drumming styles from West Africa, South India, South Korea, and the Middle East; I also encountered a good number of women participating in drumming circles.<sup>6</sup>

This contrasted greatly with my conception that drumming was largely performed by men, a product of my childhood experience in Korea. Only male elders played drums in my village during the biggest holidays such as lunar New Year and Korean Thanksgiving Day; only boys played drums in the elementary school marching band. Nonetheless, I might have joined the school marching band. In fourth grade, a dozen students were gathered by the music teacher, having been selected as candidates for the school’s marching band. The music teacher, a man in his thirties or forties, started looking at our hands to decide which instrument we were going to

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<sup>6</sup> While researching my master’s thesis, I met Sister Leah, the first female jembe drummer involved in the Congo Square Drummers and Dancers in Brooklyn. She was not allowed to play with the male drummers for seven years. According to her, male drummers would push or close her off when she tried to join in drumming with them.



play. Generally, girls were advised to learn flute or clarinet, and boys brass or drum. When looking at my hands, the teacher told me to learn a small drum. At first I felt ashamed, because I thought he might have thought that I was a boy; not only did I have short hair, I also did not have any clothes and accessories clearly identifying myself as a girl, since having long hair and wearing “girly” clothes such as skirts was possible only for wealthier families. Because other girls did not play drums, I decided not to join the band; indeed, I still doubt whether the teacher intended to have a girl learn a drum, since there were no girls playing drums before. Nevertheless, I regret that I was not courageous enough to challenge the gender norm when given the opportunity.

Since I had not seen many women playing drums until I left Korea in 2002, I believed that women’s drumming was a recent phenomenon. Therefore, I could not agree with the final part of Deborah Wong’s statement: “It is commonly accepted that “[i]n a cross-cultural context, it is extremely unusual for women to play drums, let alone to specialize in them, and it is even more unusual in the Asian traditional arts (*with the notable exception of Korea*)” (Wong 2000: 73).<sup>7</sup> Through pilot research in 2008, however, I found that women’s drumming in Korea has a longer history than I thought. At the same time, I also learned from Wong that she based her assertion on encounters with Korean drumming as performed by female dancers in such drum-dance repertoire as *janggu chum* (*janggu* dance) and *samgomu/ogomu* (lit. three/five drum dance)<sup>8</sup> in the United States (Wong 10/15/11).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Italics mine.

<sup>8</sup> This drum dance repertoire was developed as stage dance performance throughout the twentieth century by dancers who wanted to incorporate traditional performing arts; *janggu chum* originated from what gisaeng danced with *janggu*, while *samgomu/ogomu* originated from what monks played with *beopgo* (large barrel drum) in Buddhist temples.

<sup>9</sup> Interviews are indicated by date; dates are in U.S. format.

In other cultures, certainly, it is commonly—if mistakenly—accepted that drumming is typically a male practice. In a number of places, women are prohibited from drumming because they are believed to pollute and weaken its practice. Women are not allowed to play *bata* drums at Santeria rituals in Cuba, because of the fear that their reproductive powers and menstrual blood will weaken the sacred power of the drum (Hagedorn 2001). In a similar vein, women’s drumming in Ghana was traditionally taboo due to the “spiritual associations of instruments and music making contexts” (Hunter 2012: 135); since “drums are believed not only to house spirits, but to establish communication with gods” (ibid.: 136), menstruating women are considered a “pollutant” of the spiritual qualities of drumming. In some cases, the control of public space by men had led to the de facto male domination of drumming (Doubleday 2008). The Japanese ruling authorities in the early seventeenth century, who considered the first *kabuki* troupe, which was all-female, “nonconformist and threatening,” banned women’s public performances altogether (Bender 2012). As women’s performance was thus limited to private entertainment, drumming culture developed with a masculine orientation. Japanese *taiko* in particular was hyper-masculinized—with an emphasis on *kata* (detailed choreographed patterns of movements), athleticism, and strength—to reassert a Japanese masculinity devastated by World War II (Yoon 2009).

However, in the regions of Mesopotamia, the Mediterranean, Egypt, and the Arabian Peninsula, frame drums have been performed predominantly by women since the pre-biblical period (Doubleday 1990). In these regions, women played drums in contexts such as “temple rituals, victory and battle songs, family and tribal rituals, entertainments at royal banquets, and ecstatic trance culture” both in the public and private spheres (ibid.: 110). In recent decades, women are increasingly participating in drumming practices. In the United States, women are

involved in the drum circle subculture, where people from different backgrounds pursue spirituality and build communities while drumming and dancing (Choi Yoonjah 2005; Pike 2001). Some women in the United States challenge cultural traditions in which they cannot or are not supposed to drum, creating their own styles; for example, *taiko* has appealed to Asian Americans, not only because of its strength, control, and loudness, but because of its redefinition of Asian women's body movements by challenging traditional practice (Wong 2000). Women are likewise now able to play drum in Ghana, as the advent of Christianity, lowered status of chiefs, and economic interest have led male drummers to leave the villages (Adjei 2007).

### **Women in the Male Musical Realm**

Women often experience barriers when entering a male musical realm. This is more so in fields where men are believed to be superior due to the technology used (Bourdage 2010; Doubleday 2008; Katz 2006). For instance, Bourdage points out that women have been institutionally deprived of recognition as great electric guitar players due to “the underlying assumption that women are inferior to men, the tendency to link powerful technologies to masculinity, and the subsequent tendency to treat women as amateurs in technological fields regardless of their training and talent” (Bourdage 2010: 12). Katz likewise identifies the turntable battle as a gendered space where young men “reinscribe certain masculine ideals” through technology and competition (Katz 2006: 594).

When women enter a male realm, they tend to adopt established gender norms. The all-women salsa bands in Cali, Colombia that emerged in the 1990s were “obliged to adopt the image of women as sex objects that predominates in the Colombian media and music industry—miniskirts, high heels, makeup, and provocative choreography,” although they strived to achieve

the professional standards of all-male bands (Waxer 2001: 235). In Indonesia women's gamelan ensembles are guided by male teachers, coaches, and composers who make the repertoire less physically and intellectually challenging in deference to "their supposed feminine characteristics and perceived lack of musical-technical skill" (Downing 2010: 60). This maintains a perception of women as inferior to men, shifting the focus from women's musical skills to appearance.

My study examines the field of Korean drumming as a historically male musical domain with substantial involvement by women in recent decades, and thus as a contested site where gender conceptions—whether associated with Confucianism, nationalism, or commercialization—are represented, reinforced, challenged, and negotiated. The theoretical framework I employ in this study derives from the lineage of Bourdieu's practice theory. Bourdieu (1977) argues that underlying societal structures are internalized—in bodily form within an individual—as "habitus" when the individual interacts with objectified structures such as rituals and performance. This concept of "habitus" has often been applied in ethnomusicological studies of musical practice in relation to gender (Cowan 1990; Sugarman 1997; Tsitsishivili 2006). Examining, respectively, wedding singing in an Albanian community in North America and dancing at weddings in Northern Greece, both Sugarman and Cowan argue that singing and dancing practices represent the structured gender norms of each community and that those internalized gender concepts are in turn reinforced through performance. Similarly, Tsitsishivili's work on the Georgian *supra* feast demonstrates that different singing styles between men and women project gender-specific attributes. "Rooster women," however, who drink, feast, and sing like men, are perceived differently from "idealized" women, and become socially valued by acquiring masculine qualities based on the reinforced male superiority. She argues that those women "negotiate gender through diverse

stylized repetitions of bodily gestures, discourses, enactments, and sentiments in order to juggle between their individual self and the prescribed gendered self” (Tsitsishivili 2006: 486). This point invokes Butler’s concept of performativity, based on a Foucauldian premise regarding power and discourse: the self becomes the essence of an ontological “I” through the repetition of practices influenced by a regularized discourse and the constraint and prohibition of norms (Butler 1991).

Following these scholars, I hypothesize that Korean drumming embodies gender conceptions—e.g. “hegemonic masculinities” and “emphasized femininities” (Connell 1987)—that developed alongside such historical Korean structures as Confucianism, nationalism, and commercialization, while at the same time reinforcing those concepts in individuals. Furthermore, I argue that Korean women drummers are both influenced and constrained by the discourse on drummers—e.g. what drummers are supposed to do and be, what women are supposed to do and be, etc.—through which power is exercised and resisted. These women are situated not only as confronting the “masculinity” of drumming and the “masculine” culture of the field, but also as performing the culturally authorized norms of “femininity” that broader society attaches to them. They seek an “I” through their engagement in the practice of drumming, negotiating between performing in ways that are typically categorized as “masculine” and “feminine.”

By investigating a historically male musical domain increasingly populated by women, I intend not only to broaden scholarly perspectives on music and gender in Korean music, but also to provide a new approach for the study of music and gender. Furthermore, by jointly applying Western theoretical approaches to Korean scholarship and presenting the analytic views of

Korean scholars to Western scholars, I will encourage an ethnographic praxis that avoids prioritization of a particular—usually outsider—conceptual framework.

### **Gender Ideologies in Korean Confucianism and Nationalism**

Of the many different social structures that have influenced gender ideologies in Korea, Confucianism and nationalism are the most important. As women have gained more educational and occupational opportunities in contemporary society, their participation in the public sphere, including economic and political activities, has increased. Gender equality has been systematically promoted by governmental policy and law, along with the women's rights movement. Nevertheless, Korean civil society has remained primarily androcentric as a consequence of its Confucian legacy (Lee Joo-Yeon 2004; Moon 2002a). Pally asserts that while Korean society has been modernized and Westernized in terms of material culture, it still embraces some Confucian traditions (Pally 1990). Moon also argues that “[w]hile the social context and the specific content of the gender division of labor have been transformed, women's relegation to the domestic sphere is an apparent continuity between Confucian and modern gender ideologies” (Moon 2002a: 478). Lee and Kim assert that women remain socially subordinate due to the cultural expectations of family-centric patriarchy, even as they have become more influential than men in consumer culture (Lee and Kim 2010).

Confucianism was imported from China around the fourth century B.C., and was officially adopted as the state ideology in the Joseon dynasty. Since then, it has strongly influenced ethical principles concerning behavior, values, and human relationships (Lee Joo-Yeon 2004); these extend to gender conceptions. For example, according to Confucianism, men are supposed to be “authoritative, dominant, strong, independent, and intelligent,” while women

are “obedient, quiet, dependent, passive, warm and wise” in playing the role of wife and mother (ibid: 29). This naturalizes women’s relegation to the domestic realm, while men are expected to work in the public sphere. The dichotomy between women and men governing Confucian gender ideology is often used to rationalize gender hierarchies by projecting *yang* onto men and *yin* onto women, even though the theory of “*eum* and *yang*” (the Korean terms for *yin* and *yang*) aims to promote harmony and coexistence by embracing contrasts (Lee Sang Hwa 2005).

As a result, a value system supposing *yang*’s superiority over *eum* is projected onto relations between men and women; thus the “theoretical foundations for the value system of men’s superiority over women have been reaffirmed” (ibid.: 100). In the same way, women’s subordination to men is often attributed to “natural” male supremacy (Choi Yong-jin 2003). Although “the idea of women’s subordination to men was not embodied in Confucian philosophy but was historically combined with Confucianism by those who established their social order based on patriarchy” (Koh Eunkang 2008: 353-4; Lee Sook-In 1993), even scholars defending Confucianism against feminists have acknowledged that “Confucianism contributed to the preservation of patriarchy and male domination in Korea” (Koh Eunkang 2008: 353).

The influence of Korean nationalism on gender conceptions is more recent. Nationalism has played an important role in the identity of the nation during the past century of colonialism, warfare, and division, while its dominance results in “constrain[ing] space for liberalism in the public sphere in general” (Shin Gi-Wook 2006: 231). Significantly, nationalism is sometimes criticized by feminists because of its deployment of femininity and sexuality. During the postcolonial period, women were not only abused as a low-cost factory work force for the nationalist pursuit of industrialization and economic development, but also had their bodies

disciplined through the population policy (Chung Hyun-Back: 40-41).<sup>10</sup> Worse, the prostitution of Korean women for the U.S. military forces was negotiated and systematized by the Korean government after the Korean War (Lee Na-Young 2007).

Korean nationalism influenced the construction of Korean masculinities. Compared to the Joseon Dynasty when “it was a gentleman scholar, not a martial warrior, who represented ‘hegemonic masculinity’ under the Confucian order” (Moon Seungsook 2005: 47), a discourse emphasizing the importance of the body and physical power arose in response to Japanese colonialism, to create a nationalist paradigm of “resistance masculinity” (Song Myung Jin 2010). Following Japanese colonialism and the Korean War, militarization—partly due to the compulsory military system and partly through the attitude of the military dictatorship (1961-1993)—became embedded in Korean daily practice.<sup>11</sup> In this way, an “aggressive masculinity” based on military culture has in turn become hegemonic in the country (Kwon Insook 2005; Jeong Heejin 2011).

According to Moon Seungsook (2002b), features of “hegemonic masculinity” in contemporary Korean society include “the role of family provider,” “mandatory military service,” and “artificial distance from reproduction,” which are constructed with systematic support from the government. During the Park Chung Hee regime (1963-1979), the Confucian concept of men’s role as family provider was reinforced by a 1962 law that “required the household master [eldest son] to financially support his family in exchange for legally

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<sup>10</sup> The Korean government began promoting a population policy in the 1960s to lower the birth rate; women were forced to practice contraception and be sterilized. As a result, the average birth rate of six in the 1960s was reduced to 1.6 by 1988 (Kim Eun-Shil 1996).

<sup>11</sup> Korean men’s compulsory military service was first initiated by the Japanese colonial authority in 1944 during World War II. It was revived in 1950 during the Korean War, and has been maintained since then (Han Hong-gu 2002).



recognizing his authority over his family members” (ibid.: 81). Likewise, mandatory military service also “contributed to the modernization of women’s subordination by acting as a mechanism that essentializes and nationalizes gender differences, thus reinforcing the dichotomy of the masculine provider and the feminine housewife” (ibid.: 101).

### **Gender Conceptions in Contemporary Korea**

In contemporary Korean society the mass media, including television programs, commercials, music videos, and online games, are instrumental in representing and reinforcing concepts of masculinities and femininities. According to many studies on TV commercials, TV dramas, and music videos, women’s representations in contemporary media have been changing in recent decades, from passive to proactive—for instance, housewives giving way to successful career women (Baek and Park 2009; Chung Gee Hyun 2007; Lee and Baek 2013). A particularly noteworthy study concerns women’s representation in television car commercials (Lee and Baek 2013), which portray an idealized image of the Korean woman in each decade. Women in the commercials of the 1980s were housewives dedicated to and assisting their husbands; the women in the commercials of the 1990s were enterprising career women, although their happiness still depended on men’s care and love. In the 2000s women characters pursued their interests independently and with an open-minded spirit, while a 2011 commercial featured an “alpha girl” superior to men in many aspects. Nonetheless, women are still sexually objectified and commodified for the benefit of male-dominant fantasies and often described as pursuing materialism and prioritizing appearance in many commercials and music videos (Baek and Park 2009; Kwon Gi Young 2004; Lee Kyu Dong 2013; Shin Hyo-yeong 2009).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> A recent study on videos of women dance-music performers, including idol girl-groups, shows how women are sexually objectified and their bodies commodified even when they are the main actors (Lee Kyu Dong 2013). An

Men's images in the mass media have also changed from "traditional" stereotypes—authoritarian, patriarchal "strong man" (*sanae daejangbu*)—to men who are humorous, attentive to spouses, and cognizant of their own appearance (Chung Gee Hyun 2007; Lee Guiok 2005). A study on masculinity as represented in the advertisements in men's magazines (Lee Guiok 2005) shows that those in the 1970s were dominated by "physically strong" men, followed by successful or famous men in the 1980s; since the 1990s, these men are shown as "taking care of their appearance." Lee Su-An (2008) points out that men who have a "soft" and "flexible" image and a "muscular and at the same time sexy and soft body" have become increasingly desirable in the culture industry since the late 1990s. Yoon Joe Won (2010) observes that *ggotminam* (lit. flower handsome man), a Korean term equivalent to "metrosexual" and specifying a muscular body within a cute face, has been popular since the early 2000s. While some of this can be attributed to capitalist commodification—only a man who cares about his appearance will buy the products being advertised—Yoon Joe Won also comments on gender bending among idol boy groups, who often wear noticeable makeup and more androgynous and/or flamboyant clothing. In this way, it seems that the image of masculinity in Korea has changed, and is less in opposition to what is perceived as "feminine."

Nevertheless, even as contemporary society and its media increasingly represent a wide spectrum of femininities and masculinities, many Koreans continue to use "femininity" and "masculinity" in the limited sense of what women and men are expected to be and do according

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interesting development regarding women as subject versus object is apparent in the discussion of videos by the "sexy diva" of the late 1990s and early 2000s, compared with the girl groups of the late 2000s. While the millennial diva was the object of the male gaze, she was also portrayed as symbolically challenging and resisting men and the male realm to some extent. The girl groups, however, typically represented "pure," "dependent," and "passive" femininity, with rhetoric reinforcing the male-dominant ideology. Hence the higher popularity of girl groups among male audiences than among women: they embody patriarchal fantasies without the interference of a rhetoric of individual independence (ibid.: 187).

to polarized, mutually exclusive gender stereotypes. They often use gender terms such as “feminine” (e.g. *yeoseongjeok*, *yeoseongsreoun*) and “masculine” (e.g. *namseongjeok*, *namjadaun*) in a naturalized way. These terms are not intended to embrace all the possibilities of what women and men do and are; rather, they are often used in the limited sense of what people are expected to be and do according to gendered stereotypes. For example, “feminine” typically implies “docile,” “modest,” “delicate,” and “nurturing,” while “masculine” suggests “proactive,” “energetic,” and “aggressive.”<sup>13</sup> These dominant forms of “femininity” and “masculinity” are polarized and mutually exclusive, resembling the dichotomous Confucian-based “*eum* and *yang*,” and the government construction of “the masculine provider and the feminine housewife” (Moon Seungsook 2002b). This may be linked to the strength of Korea’s heteronormative culture. Homosexuality is currently taboo in Korea; only a few entertainers have come out, and while the public has increasingly become conscious and respectful of queerness, society in general is still unwilling to consider queerness as normal.

## **Field Research in Korea**

I began conducting field research in Korea in summer 2008 as a pilot study. Having become interested in female performers’ perceptions of inequality and resistance in the male-dominant drumming world, I began to contact several women performers—either percussionists or dancers—who have played drums for a substantial portion of their lives. On a return trip, in the summer of 2010, I expanded the list of potential research collaborators, both men and women, not only by attending as many drumming performances as I could, but also through

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<sup>13</sup> I do not intend to essentialize these qualities as feminine or masculine, but to give some examples of what have been ascribed as “feminine” and “masculine” qualities within the Korean gender norm.

introductions provided by scholars and performers whom I had met earlier. I finally selected five women actively involved in the contemporary drumming performance scene as primary collaborators. I compiled schedules of performances and festivals related to drumming that I should attend during my next trip and obtained Korean literature on gender ideologies and representations for reference as well.

In 2011 I returned to Korea to conduct substantial research from April to November. However, I found that three of my chosen primary collaborators were no longer active performers, due to pregnancy, leaving the performance group, or going abroad. I set about finding other women performers to take their place, but soon after decided to keep interacting with them regardless. Instead of concentrating on those primary performers, I interacted with approximately 60 secondary collaborators (performers, scholars, organizers, and participants), ultimately leading to a macroscopic approach in this project.

I attended the rehearsals, classes, and concerts of my primary collaborators, observing their performances as well as interactions with colleagues.<sup>14</sup> I interviewed them, sometimes as a follow-up to such observations; they were generally open with me, even on personal issues, and some were obliging enough to put me in touch with other performers. The secondary collaborators are women who have been involved in *yeoseong nongakdan*, college *pungmul* groups, shamanic rituals, and amateur women's drumming groups, as well as selected men who have been leaders of *pungmul* groups, pioneers of *samulnori*, and accompanying drummers in

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<sup>14</sup> I attended a variety of drumming performances—drumming classes, rehearsals, concerts, outdoor festivals, and competitions—many of which featured my collaborators. The biggest events were the *Yeourak* [yeo-u-rak] festival at National Theater of Korea, and Gangneung *danoje*, one of the biggest village festivals in South Korea. The former features contemporary drumming groups and experimental music ensembles incorporating traditional drumming; in the latter, five *nongak* (lit. farmers' music; regional *pungmul*) groups designated as Important Intangible Cultural Heritages performed continuously, offering an opportunity to observe many different regional *pungmul* styles in one place.

performing genres where drumming is only open to men. I also interacted with audience members at drumming performances as well as organizers and scholars, to learn how they perceive gender issues as presented in the drumming field.

I approached these collaborators with a number of preconceptions. I thought I would not have any problem doing research in my home country, as I would share the performers' nationality and ethnicity. However, I felt I was an outsider since I was not from the *gugak* field; I was recognized as a researcher, which I believe has a different status from a researcher from the *gugak* field. Sometimes I felt that my gender, race, and lack of seniority might have affected reactions to my work; for example, I suspect that I might have been more well-informed and supported if I was white, male, or a senior researcher.<sup>15</sup> Sometimes, my interview requests were denied or not welcomed; I later learned that a number of the people I hoped to interview had negative experiences with “researchers” who never got back to them after finishing their dissertations. Others were willing to be sources for their own “students” but not outsiders.

I approached my collaborators with questions of “femininity” and “masculinity” that themselves conformed to dominant gender conceptions—heteronormativity. First, I assumed that the drumming field must be constructed as “masculine” due to its domination by men. Second, I took for granted that the women I spoke with would pursue a version of “femininity,” since they are women negotiating a male space. When I interacted with collaborators, I used the terms “feminine” and “masculine” in a naturalized way as many Koreans use them, referring to a narrow conception of what women and men are supposed to do and be according to gendered stereotypes. Their responses seemed to justify this approach,

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<sup>15</sup> White- or light-skinned researchers enjoy higher status than “natives” because of the colonial experience and the continuing effects of its legacy, in which they are more respected and desired (Warren 1988).

confirming my assumptions; however, as a result I did not challenge those assumptions during the field research process, and thus I might have imposed those assumptions to the collaborators to some degrees. Furthermore, the assumption that “femininity” is natural to women or that “masculinity” is natural to men did not give space for the possibilities that some women might be drawn to drumming precisely because of the extent to which the “masculine” connotations of drumming feel natural to them.

I assumed that women must have experienced difficulty or inequality in a male-dominant field, and that they could more easily share their experiences as women with another woman. However, women from older generations in particular tended to deny that they had such gender-oriented experiences. Following initial interviews conducted during the pilot research, I considered numerous interpretations: perhaps they were unwilling to share stories regarding difficulties or inequalities; perhaps they were afraid of criticism over the disclosure; perhaps they internalized the established unequal gender relations; or perhaps they really stood above or outside the typical patterns of experience. Reading articles on the “(un)conscious” in a feminist theory class led me to rethink these interpretations. Since the women I interacted with generally enjoyed good reputations as dancers and/or drummers in the field, they might have been unwilling to re-experience “unhappy” aspects of a largely successful career. Or, economic and material comfort might have disguised their “essential powerlessness and oppression” (Westchester Radical Feminists, in MacKinnon 1989). Multiple interviews with these performers did allow me to hear more of their thoughts regarding the male-centric culture of the drumming field, although some remained concerned that I would tell their stories in my dissertation. Nevertheless, not all these women experienced difficulties; their experiences often depended on social background and circumstance. One woman drummer felt that I was

concentrating only on negative aspects of the drumming field. If that is the case, however, it is not to disparage the field by how women experience it; these are some issues that always emerge when women enter a male-dominated field.

## **Overview of Chapters**

My dissertation comprises seven chapters: I) Introduction; II) The Historical and Contemporary Contexts of Korean Drumming from a Gender Perspective; III) Gendered Conceptions of Korean Drumming: The Masculinity of *Pungmul* and *Samulnori*; IV) Contemporary Drumming Groups: Surveys and Strategies; V) Women Drummers: Portraits and Concerns; VI) Women's Exclusion from Drumming: *Pansori* and Shaman Ritual; and VII) Conclusion.

Chapter II traces the sociocultural background, educational practices, and musical culture that have led women in the twentieth century to become increasingly involved in Korean drumming. I examine the historical transformation of drumming practices, centering on *pungmul* practice from the early twentieth century to the mid-twentieth century, to trace how *yeoseong nongakdan* emerged in the late 1950s. I investigate the sociocultural factors of the 1970-1980s that resulted in a growing interest in drumming: the role of a governmental "preservation" policy for traditional music; intellectuals' emphasis on folk culture as a "cultural movement;" and *samulnori*'s appeal to younger generations. Last, I survey women's participation in learning and practicing drumming in recent decades as an outgrowth of the infrastructure for drumming education established earlier in light of growing public interest in drumming.

Chapter III interrogates the construction of the "masculinity" of Korean drumming, particularly in relation to the physicality and "masculinization" of women drummers. After

examining gender terms and expressions in Korean drumming and the application of *eum* and *yang* in music-making, I survey how drummers perceive, experience, and evaluate physicality in drumming, whether or not gender plays a role. Next, I demonstrate how women drummers become “masculinized” to adjust to a drumming culture that embodies the hierarchical order influenced by military culture. Finally, I explore *samulnori* as a manifestation of further “masculinization” in its development alongside the “modern” aesthetic and national demand for a “powerful image” in the 1980s.

Chapter IV surveys some contemporary professional drumming groups, most of which have created new drumming styles based on traditional Korean drumming but which also incorporate instruments and performance styles from other cultures. I present selected drumming groups—either men’s or mixed-gender—currently popular in Korea and sometimes recognized outside Korea, and explore how gender is perceived and/or performed in these groups and among their members. Women’s drumming groups, whether extant or not, are introduced, followed by a discussion of their main issues and concerns: posterity, marriage/pregnancy/children, artistic imperatives, and funding. Furthermore, I analyze their strategies of emphasizing “femininity,” whether implicit or explicit, as a means of survival in a male-dominated field.

Chapter V draws on the experiences of professional women drummers through the stories of three women: Park Eunha, Shin Heeyeon, and Oh Hyun-ju. Each drummer is introduced with a biography; they discuss noteworthy experiences and their conceptions of drumming in relation to the internalization of *eum* and *yang* in a musical context, the effect of marriage and childbirth on a performance career, and concerns about being a “woman drummer” in a marginalized performing field. Last, I delve into barriers that professional women drummers often encounter



because of normalization of the exclusion of women, marriage and children, and prejudice towards women.

Chapter VI addresses the continued exclusion of women from playing drums, with case-studies of two performance genres: *pansori*, and Gangneung-based shaman ritual performed by hereditary shaman families. I examine the naturalization of men as drummers in these two practices through a discourse that presents maleness as essential to drumming. I define the parameters of the discussion based on what drummers as well as the singers they perform with say about their practice, tracing their construction of what an idealized drummer is. I then analyze how ideas and ideals of maleness both create and reinforce these practices and discourses.

The main body of this dissertation concentrates on the gendered conceptions and experiences of women drummers involved in professional performance. I intend to demonstrate that women in the professional field are situated in contradiction and confrontation: even though they increasingly engage with contemporary drumming practices (as examined in Chapter II), they constantly confront the “masculinity” of drumming and “masculine” culture of the field (Chapter III); must adapt to or challenge the naturalized practice of men as drummers in certain genres (Chapter VI); and must negotiate their “femininity” in terms of issues of family life, especially childbearing, and “feminization” as a strategy (Chapters IV and V). I argue that they survive in the field by expressing the “masculine” qualities of drumming on the one hand and pursuing “feminine” qualities on the other hand, both of which largely represent and conform to the gendered norms of Korea, influenced by Confucianism, nationalism, and media commercialization.

## Chapter II. The Historical and Contemporary Contexts of Korean Drumming from a Gender Perspective

This chapter traces the sociocultural factors, educational practices, and musical culture that have led women in the twentieth century to become increasingly involved in the traditionally male-dominated practice of Korean drumming. Among the contexts in which Korean drumming was performed are village rituals, shaman rituals, and the performances of professional musicians and itinerant entertainment troupes. This chapter concentrates on the *pungmul* genre, originally performed in the context of the village community, eventually adopted by itinerant troupes and professional drummers, and further modernized by contemporary drummers.<sup>16</sup>

*Pungmul*, an ensemble practice in which a group of people play percussion instruments, was dominated by men until the mid-twentieth century. As Korean society went through drastic sociopolitical upheavals in the twentieth century due to the influence of Western culture, Japanese colonial occupation, and industrialization, the village-based community culture was dismantled; drumming practices, in turn, became increasingly decontextualized from village communities, and instead became the province of professional entertainers. In the meantime, women entertainers had been expanding their repertoire since the late nineteenth century by learning male musical genres including *pansori*; many women achieved commercial success, especially in the recording and theatre industries, in the early twentieth century. The *yeoseong nongakdan* emerged from this background in the mid-twentieth century.

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<sup>16</sup> There are dozens of expressions referring to traditional percussion ensemble practice in village context: *maegu*, *pungjang*, *pungmul*, *geolgung*, *geollip*, *gut*, etc. “*Nongak* (lit. farmers’ music)” came from the Japanese colonial authority; since then regional *pungmul* have been called “*nongak*,” and the government also adopted this name and applied it to the drumming genres designated as Intangible Cultural Heritages. However, Korean scholars in recent decades tend to call it “*pungmulgut*,” both for historical accuracy and to reclaim the pre-colonial term.

In the late twentieth century, public interest in traditional Korean drumming grew along with the government's support for traditional music, growing awareness of folk culture among political activists, and the popularization of *samulnori*. This provided the foundation for widespread drumming education in the 1990s and consequentially encouraged women to study drumming in large numbers.

The first section of this chapter examines the historical transformation of drumming practices, centering on *pungmul*, from the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910) to the emergence of *yeoseong nongakdan* in the late 1950s-1970s. The second concentrates on the sociocultural factors of the 1970-1980s that resulted in a growing interest in drumming: the role of government "preservation" systems for traditional music, intellectuals' emphasis on folk culture as a "cultural movement," and *samulnori*'s appeal to younger generations. The last section surveys women's participation based on the infrastructure established earlier in learning and practicing drumming in recent decades.

### **Historical Transformation and the Emergence of *Yeoseong Nongakdan***

#### ***Pungmul* Practices in the Contexts of Village Events and Entertainment**

*Pungmul* used to be performed by groups of men for village rituals, calendrical events, and agricultural labor collaborations. For example, in the early spring when agricultural life resumed, village communities prayed together at a *dangsan*, a shrine or tree in which the village's protective deities are believed to be located, for good luck and a good harvest.<sup>17</sup>

*Pungmul* performers generally played percussion instruments—*ggwaenggwari*, *jing*, *janggu*,

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<sup>17</sup> The village rituals were led by shamans, a head of a village in a Confucian style, or the leader of the *pungmul* players, depending on the village (Lee Bohyung 1986; Kweon Eun-Yeoung 2008b).

*buk*, and *sogo*—and sometimes *taepyeongso* around the *dangsan* (see Figure II-1). Carrying *sindae*, a long wooden pole symbolizing the deities, and flags, they would practice “*jisin balpgi*”—playing percussion while marching and visiting each house to bring good luck for the year to the house’s protective deities (Lee Bohyung 1986).<sup>18</sup> Afterwards, villagers enjoyed entertainment provided by *pungmul* players while sharing food blessed by the deities. *Pungmul* was played at similar events of the lunar calendrical cycle, including the New Year and Korean Thanksgiving Day on August 15<sup>th</sup>, along with folk games and performing arts such as masked dance. *Pungmul* was also performed around—as well as on the way to and returning from—the rice fields to boost energy and encourage efficiency in the cooperative planting and harvesting of rice, under the farmers’ communal labor system called “*dure*” (see Figure II-2).



**Figure II-1:** Playing *pungmul* around *dangsan* © Yeosu News

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<sup>18</sup> According to Ju Ganghyeon (2004b), historical records show the earliest form of *jisin balpgi* in the early 16th century and suggest that *geollip* (similar to *jisin balpgi*, but more oriented toward monetary profit) was practiced more in the mid-17th century. He concludes that the present form of *geollip* seems to have been established in the late 18th century.



**Figure II-2:** Playing *pungmul* in the rice field © The Academy of Korean Studies

The public space of village ritual was dominated by men.<sup>19</sup> This gender specification is related to Confucianism. The patriarchal ideology of Confucianism, according to which women belong in the house, generally marginalized women; among other things, it prevented them from participating in communal rituals, especially those involving protective spirits (Howard 1989; Kim Jin Myung 2001).<sup>20</sup> Women's exclusion from labor outside the house and the belief that women's labor was worth less than men's kept women from joining in the entertainment practice within the *dure* system (Shin Yongha 2009). Thus, as women were excluded from village rituals

<sup>19</sup> Village rituals ideally involve the participation of all village members regardless of their gender and age, but men carried the most influence, making decisions on important matters and conducting core rituals (Kim Wol-Duk 2007).

<sup>20</sup> Howard also mentions the concept that, since women's menstruation was "tied to pollution in traditional thought," their participation in village rituals would sully the ceremonies (Howard 1989: 8).

and *dure*, they could not participate in drumming.<sup>21</sup> However, there are women-centered village rituals in the southwestern region. The folk music scholar Lee Bohyung shared with me that there were a few villages, including his own, where women could play drums in public gatherings, because the gods in those villages expected to be worshiped by the female population as well (7/12/08). A study on women-centered village rituals of the southwestern region shows that women play *pungmul* for the village rituals headed by senior women villagers and hereditary female shamans; those women-centered rituals are both political and religious, as they strengthen women's solidarity and sometimes expel bad spirits (Pyo Inju 2000). Another study demonstrates that women have played *pungmul* and certain metal household items in the ritual for evicting goblins (*doggaebi*) that are believed to cause fire, or for appeasing the spirits of men killed due to false accusation (Kim Wol-Duk 2007).<sup>22</sup>

*Pungmul* was also performed by itinerant entertainment troupes from the lowest class, for entertainment and/or fund-raising. *Sadang*, believed to be the oldest such troupe in the Joseon Dynasty, was mostly made up of women, who typically performed folk songs and danced with *beoggu* (small drum) (Ju Ganghyeon 2004a). During performances they sold talismans given by the Buddhist temple, and gave a part of their earnings back to the temple (Sim Useong 1989). *Namsadang* (lit. male *sadang*), a type of itinerant entertainment troupe speculated to have

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<sup>21</sup> Video recordings of five “*nongak*” performances designated as Important Intangible Cultural Heritages, produced by the National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage (gunnip munhwajae yeonguso) in 1996-2002, shows women excluded from drumming performance associated with Confucian rituals but featured as food preparers in ritual or *dure* contexts. This excludes the video of Jansu *nongak*, produced in 2011, where more than half of the performers were women.

<sup>22</sup> In that kind of ritual, women have danced around the village wearing underwear on their heads at night, through which they intend not only to block bad luck but to create a festive realm for women (Kim Wol-Duk 2007). It is speculated that the “*eum*” of women is effective in dealing with the *yang* of goblins (ibid.) This ritual, including dancing at night and playing drums and metals without any form, is considered as resistance to the patriarchal society (ibid.).



emerged from the *sadang* tradition, performed a wider repertoire, including *pungmul* with *mudong* (lit. dancing child) *nori* (lit. play), bowl spinning, acrobatics, tightrope walking, masked dance, and puppetry (see Figure II-3); they were most popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Sim Useong 1989 & Ju Ganghyeon 2004a). Other itinerant entertainment troupes also emerged in the late Joseon Dynasty following wars with China and Japan (Ju Ganghyeon 2004a).



**Figure II-3:** Tightrope walking, *mudong nori*, and *pungmul* performance (clockwise, from left above) by Anseong Municipal Namsadang Baudeogi Pungmuldan (AMNBP) in 2012 and 2013 © AMNBP

As *namsadang* troupes declined in the early to mid-twentieth century, they joined with similar itinerant troupes; these groups would occasionally have one or two women, who would

then become part of the *namsadang* performance (Hesselink 2012; Sim Useong 1989). An exception was the legendary Baudeogi, a female *namsadang* leader and *sogo* player in the late nineteenth century. She joined the troupe when she was five years old<sup>23</sup> and became the leader of the troupe when she was fifteen (Kim Gyeongmi 2004). Women entertainers—for example, *sadang*—were often regarded as “lascivious” since they used their body in front of men and were involved in prostitution. Baudeogi, however, was honored throughout the country after receiving an *okgwanja* (headband button made of jade) from the King’s father Heungseon daewongun (1820~1898), during the reign of King Gojong (1863-1907) (ibid.).

### **The Dismantling of “Community Culture”**

From the late nineteenth through the twentieth century, Korea experienced rapid sociocultural changes: the Joseon Dynasty was opened to Western culture in the late nineteenth century, followed by Japanese colonialism, the Korean War, and rapid industrialization promoted by the government in the late twentieth century. The community culture on which Korean society was based was dismantled through such changes.

As Christian missionaries objected to Korean folk religious practices, including shamanism, ancestral worship, Buddhism, and Confucianism, the spread of Christianity from the late nineteenth century led to a decrease in traditional culture based on folk religious practice, particularly village rituals (Jung Goo-Young 2003). The prohibition of such “superstitions” was not only enforced by the Japanese colonial authority, but also revived by the Korean government in an attempt to “modernize premodern practice” in the 1970s (ibid.: 8). Kim Duk Soo, a

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<sup>23</sup> According to the Korean system of calculating age, a person is one year old at birth, and adds another year to that age on the first day of New Year. Therefore, 5 years old in Korean system is equivalent to 3-4 years old in American system.



founder of *samulnori*, points out that the labeling of shamanism as superstitious by Christian missionaries led rural villages to no longer inviting *namsadang*, whose performances had shamanistic elements (Kim Duk Soo 2007: 69).

*Pungmul* practices were also strongly discouraged during the Japanese colonial period. The Japanese colonial authority prohibited performing arts related to shamanic rituals and those by itinerant entertainment troupes, as they were believed to lead to mass gatherings (Kweon Eun-Yeoung 2008b; Son Woo-Seung 2009). When it prohibited those practices, the authority defined those related to shamanic rituals as superstitious and those related to itinerant entertainment troupes as publicly demoralizing. They also collected metal tools, including percussion instruments, to supply materials for the Japanese wars throughout Asia (Son Woo-Seung 2009). *Pungmul* performance in agricultural contexts likewise decreased when the *dure* system was dismantled due to the Japanese colonial authority, which annexed community-owned property and encouraged agricultural labor practices based on pursuing individual interest (Shin Yongha 2009; Son Woo-Seung 2009). Ironically, drumming was allowed in cases where it supported the Japanese authority's interests, such as the propagation of certain Korean religious groups that aligned with Japanese authority,<sup>24</sup> and the “*nongak* competition” which was intended to increase rice crops—which would then be sent to Japan (Kweon Eun-Yeoung 2008b; Son Woo-Seung 2009).

Since the 1960s, the Korean agricultural community has been further weakened due to rapid industrialization and the younger generation's migration to urban areas. The “Saemaeul

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<sup>24</sup> The colonial Japanese authority held contradictory attitudes towards Korean religious beliefs: while certain Korean religious groups were approved—provided they could be viewed as pro-Japanese—other practices were forbidden as “superstition.” For example, Jeungsan-gyo based in Gimje, located in the southwestern region, used *pungmul* as a way of promoting its religion; Japanese authorities allowed *pungmul* performance for the propagation of Jeungsan-gyo, as they sought to make the group pro-Japanese (Son Woo-Seung 2009).

undong” (lit. New Village Movement) of the early 1970s, through which the Korean government pursued modernization and economic wealth as well as a “change of the citizen’s value-system,” was driven by the belief that Western and modern culture based on rationality and science was superior to traditional Korean culture (Jung Goo-Young 2003: 5). This movement not only replaced old buildings in agricultural villages with modern structures, but also furthered the eradication of village and shamanic rituals. Kim Duk Soo claims that the “Saemaeul undong” demolished the shrines where the village’s protective deities were believed to be located (Kim Duk Soo 2007: 175). The perception of village rituals as “superstitions,” particularly those embracing shamanic rituals, was further spread through public school programs based on “modernization.”

Due to this transformation of Korean society, drumming practices became decontextualized from village rituals and agricultural labor contexts, but began to flourish in the commercial realm of entertainment theaters (Kweon Eun-Yeoung 2008b). New styles of theater and entertainment influenced by Japanese and Western theater genres, acrobatic troupes, and popular music from Japan gained popularity in the early twentieth century (Ju Ganghyeon 2004a). This took attention from the traditional itinerant entertainment troupes; even *namsadang* performance, the most popular of the traditional entertainments, “could not survive in the environment of modern theater culture” (Son Woo-Seung 2009: 69). In the early twentieth century, the seed of “entertainment *nongak*” (Kweon Eun-Yeoung 2003) could be found in the increase of *geollip* practices—visiting houses to play *pungmul* and bring good luck, and collecting money for doing so—and the practice of scouting skilled drummers. *Pungmul* players increasingly performed *pangut* or *jisin balpgi* in other villages to collect money for their own village. Furthermore, they scouted skilled *pungmul* players for *sangsoe* (a leading *soe* player) or

leading *janggu* players for village rituals and *dure* (ibid.). According to Kweon Eun-Yeoung, this transformation was possible because of an increase in audience desire for *pungmul* performance; the Japanese colonial restriction of village rituals and *dure* that led to the development of new *geollip* activities; the prospering of *nongak* competitions after emancipation from Japanese colonialism; and the rise of drumming performances held on temporary stages in outdoor tents (ibid.).

### ***Yeseong Nongakdan* in the Late 1950s-1970s<sup>25</sup>**

From the late 1950s through the 1970s, *yeseong nongakdan* arose in the northern Jeolla province, located in southwestern Korea (Kim Seontae 2004; Kweon Eun-Yeoung 2003). The first *yeseong nongakdan*, formed by Namwon gugakwon (*gugak* center in Namwon) in 1959, was composed of female musicians of different age groups; they were trained in the practice of drumming with the specific purpose of fund-raising (Kweon Eun-Yeoung 2003).<sup>26</sup> As it became popular outside as well as within Namwon, many more *yeseong nongakdan* formed in the northern Jeolla province; they toured cities throughout the country, performing on temporary stages in outdoor tents. The performers, mostly teenage girls and women in their twenties, were usually recruited, trained, and managed by men. According to a former member of *yeseong nongakdan*, Yoo Sunja (8/11/10), there were one or two male members among fifteen performers in her troupe. She remembers the troupe as a whole comprised of two *soe* players, one *jing*, four

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<sup>25</sup> There are only two scholars who have written about *yeseong nongakdan*: Kweon Eun-Yeoung and Kim Seontae. Kweon Eun-Yeoung is the only specialist in *yeseong nongakdan*; therefore, I rely heavily on her works in this section.

<sup>26</sup> Namwon gugakwon was formerly the *gisaeng* guild Namwon *gwonbeon*, established in 1921, where *gisaeng* were trained in *pansori*, instruments, and dance (Kim Seontae 2004). Namwon gugakwon was famous for training many master musicians, including *pansori* singers.

or five *janggu* players, and seven or eight *sogo* players. They not only played drums, but also performed *pansori*, *minyo* (folk songs), *gayageum byeongchang* (singing while accompanying themselves on the *gayageum* zither), and some dance repertoires (ibid.; Jang Hee Sun 2011). Over the next two decades, they became hugely successful, but in the late 1970s, when television became ascendant, they faded out like other itinerant entertainment troupes (Kweon Eun-Yeoung 2008a).



**Figure II-4:** Presentation of revived Honam *yeoseong nongakdan* (Yoo Sunja, center) in 2012 © Jirisan Internet News

Those who performed the genre are often considered the “first professional women drummers,” although some women played drums in the professional realm before the emergence of *yeoseong nongakdan*. For example, female members of *sadang* and *namsadang* troupes played drums, at least *sogo*; women, whether shamans or assistants, played drums and percussion instruments in some shamanic rituals; *gisaeng* learned *janggu* or *buk*.<sup>27</sup> The formation of

<sup>27</sup> According to *Joseon miin bogam* published in the 1910s, nine *gisaeng* were able to play *janggu* and *buk* among those registered in *gisaeng* guilds; there were 1,074 women who were skilled in vocal genres, 317 in dance

women's drumming troupes stemmed in part from these performers' growing presence as entertainers. In the early twentieth century, women musicians were entering the musical realm, especially through *pansori* and *changgeuk* (a modernized version of *pansori* adapted for stage); *Yeoseong gukgeukdan* (all-women *changgeuk* troupes) were popular in the 1950s (Kim Seontae 2004).<sup>28</sup> Women's participation in drumming became more socially acceptable as drumming was increasingly performed for entertainment; the removal of drumming from its exclusionary ritual context opened the possibility for equal participation by women and men (Kweon Eun-Yeoung 2008a). Kweon Eun-Yeoung (ibid.) also interprets women's entry into this male realm as reflecting an improvement of their social status due to compulsory education and the women's suffrage movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Equally, it reflects the increase of women in economic activities after the Korean War.<sup>29</sup>

The drumming performance of *yeoseong nongakdan* differed from drumming associated with village rituals with respect to both repertoire and physical movement (ibid.). It concentrated on repertoires (such as *pangut*) that emphasized music and entertainment, and excluded those associated with village rituals and theatrical plays. Troupes thus created new repertoires freely, whereas *pungmul* performance associated with village rituals maintained the traditional repertoire. The choreographic element was also emphasized in the performance of *yeoseong*

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repertoire, 75 in *yanggeum* (hammered dulcimer), 42 in *gayageum* (plucked zither), and 22 in *geomungo* (plucked zither with a stick) (Jang Hee Sun 2011: 73).

<sup>28</sup> In the late Joseon Dynasty, women entertainers began to expand their repertoire by learning men's repertoire, including *pansori*, from male professionals. Jin Chaeseon (b.1847-?) is often considered the first woman *pansori* singer to perform in court ceremonies (Choi Hyejin 1999). Women musicians grew in number with the patronage of the upper class in the nineteenth century, and they began to gain popularity primarily as vocalists in the early 20th century because of the development of modern theaters, radio broadcasting, and the recording industry (Jang Hee Sun 2011). Starting in the 1930s, women were popular in *changgeuk* and grew in presence in the instrumental fields of *sanjo* and *byeongchang* based on *gayageum*.

<sup>29</sup> 35.6% of women participated in economic activities in 1949, 47.6% in 1951 (Lee Im-ha 2003).

*nongakdan*, especially through solo performances that showcased “women’s delicacy and beauty” in dance (ibid.: 223).

Yang Jinseong, the leader of the Pilbong *nongak* group, which was designated as an Important Intangible Cultural Heritage by the national government, claims that *yeoseong nongakdan* damaged the performance activities of village *nongak* groups:

*Sangsoe* was a famous entertainer at the time... According to the male drummers, they were shocked when 17 or 18 year old girls of *yeoseong nongakdan* performed wearing pink pants and “see-through” clothing with spangles and smiling... People started inviting *yeoseong nongakdan* for village events and celebrations at which village *nongak* groups usually performed. [Male drummers] were also shocked at the fact that they were not invited any more. (8/19/10)

Kweon Eun-Yeoung (2008a) speaks negatively on how *yeoseong nongakdan* were “commodified” and “sexualized”; they not only wore flamboyant clothing, make-up, and hair styles, but they also used their bodies to appeal to the audience particularly by moving their hips and shoulders in a certain way (ibid.: 218). Kim Seontae (2004), however, claims that *udo pungmul*, a representative *pungmul* style of the southwest regions performed by *yeoseong nongakdan*, is appropriate for women in performing their “femininity,” characterized by “lower body movements, various rhythmic patterns, and individual performance” (ibid.: 44).

*Yeoseong nongakdan* was an industry that retained gendered power dynamics between women performers and their male managers and teachers. These women performers received poor financial compensation; they were often paid late, or were sometimes given food in lieu of receiving money (Kweon Eun-Yeoung 2003). Furthermore, female performers at the time were often not respected because they were considered to have the same status as *gisaeng*, *mudang* (shaman), or *sadang*, and were thus discouraged from performing by family members. Yoo Jihwa, a former member of *yeoseong nongakdan*, shared her story with me:

It was when I was thirteen or fourteen years old. A friend of mine and I went to check it out after seeing the poster recruiting members for *yeoseong nongakdan*. There were three male teachers and many women who wanted to join the group. By the time we were watching what they do while doing some errands for them for a month, our family members found out about it. So, I was forbidden to go out after having experienced corporeal punishment for the first time. “Why are you going to do what a shaman does? You can’t get married if you do.” But, when I heard that the group was leaving the village, I ran away from home. I couldn’t go back home for a few years. (8/18/10)

Similarly, Na Geumchu, a former member of *yeoseong nongakdan*, began to secretly learn music at Gwangju gugakwon (*gugak* center in Gwangju) before joining the group. While these women voluntarily joined even though their family members disapproved, other women were forced to join by their parents to provide income (Kweon Eun-Yeoung 2008a: 215).

As Western popular culture and the mass media, particularly television, became widespread in the 1970s, *yeoseong nongakdan* lost popularity, experienced financial difficulties, and eventually disbanded (Kweon Eun-Yeoung 2003). Only a few of the most popular women remained in the drumming scene. As *yeoseong nongakdan* were the only itinerant troupes playing traditional performing arts in the 1960 and 1970s, they were valuable in that they continued *pungmul* performance and developed their own repertoire (ibid.; Kim Seontae 2004). However, the women performers of *yeoseong nongakdan* were not valued by either the academy or the government. This is obvious in how the federal government designated some regional *pungmul* as Intangible Cultural Heritages; indeed, the two IICH designations received by women drummers were granted by local governments. There was considerable debate, however, when Yoo Jihwa, a leader of Jeongeup *nongak* group, was designated as Intangible Cultural Heritage by the local government in 1996. Even though she was trained by the masters of Jeongeup *nongak* and contributed to its revival, the locals did not approve of her award, in part because she was not born in Jeongeup, and in part because of her association with *yeoseong nongakdan* (Kim Seontae 2004). Na Geumchu played an instrumental role in convincing the federal government

to award Iri *nongak*, as the representative of udo *pungmul*, Intangible Cultural Heritage status. Particularly influential was her performance as a *sangsoe* of Iri *nongak* at the National Performing Arts competition in 1985. However, she was ultimately excluded from the official list of primary performers taking charge of performance and education in Iri *nongak*. In 1987, she became a *sangsoe* of Buan *nongak*, designated as Intangible Cultural Heritage by the northern Jeolla government (ibid.).

### **The Growth of the Drumming Field in the Late Twentieth Century**

The emergence of *yeoseong nongakdan* in the 1960s and 1970s stemmed from the increased presence of drumming in entertainment even as drumming waned in village and labor contexts, as well as from women's expansion in professional music in the early twentieth century. In the following decades, the growth of drumming, driven by governmental cultural policies of nation-building, college students' *pungmul* practices, and the success of *samulnori*, opened the door to even more women participating in drumming.

### **Nation-building and Traditional Music**

In the postcolonial period, the Korean government adopted cultural policies to preserve and recover "traditional culture" with the intention of reinforcing state power and nation-building (Howard 1999; Min Eungi 2004). Park Chung Hee's dictatorship, notable for promoting industrialization and modernization while oppressing the democratic movement, initiated a program called "Important Intangible Cultural Heritages" (*jungyo muhyeong munhwajae*) in the



1960s to support the transmission of “disappearing” traditional performing arts.<sup>30</sup> The system of designating “cultural heritages” aided the construction of nationalism by positioning citizens within an “imagined community”<sup>31</sup> (Oh Myung-Seok 1998). In the 1970s, an infrastructure was developed to perform and teach traditional arts by supporting *gugak* competitions, fostering *gugak* researchers at the National *Gugak* Center (Gungnip gugakwon) and the national broadcasting system KBS, and founding *gugak* departments in national universities (Jang Hee Sun 2011).

The system of Important Intangible Cultural Heritages (IICH) was established with the help of the Cultural Heritage Protection Act (*munhwajae bohobeop*) of 1962.<sup>32</sup> IICH have been designated for forms of music, dance, ritual, and craftsmanship that are valuable from historical, academic, and artistic perspectives.<sup>33</sup> Once designated by the evaluation committee composed of specialists and scholars, supposedly excellent practitioners of a particular “traditional” performing art get financial support from the government and are responsible for training

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<sup>30</sup> *Muhyeong munhwajae* is often translated as “Intangible Cultural Asset” or “Intangible Cultural Property,” but the Korean government, as of 2014, uses “Intangible Cultural Heritage” as its official English title on their website (<http://english.cha.go.kr>).

<sup>31</sup> For imagined community, c.f. Anderson 1991

<sup>32</sup> There are seven categories of state-designated heritages—“National Treasure,” “Treasure,” “Historic Site,” “Scenic Site,” “Natural Monument,” “Important Intangible Cultural Heritage,” and “Important Folklore Cultural Heritage”—and four categories of province- and city-designated heritages—“Tangible Cultural Heritage,” “Intangible Cultural Heritage,” “Monument,” and “Folklore Cultural Heritage” (Cultural Heritage Administration, available at [http://english.cha.go.kr/english/search\\_plaza\\_new/state.jsp?mc=EN\\_03\\_01](http://english.cha.go.kr/english/search_plaza_new/state.jsp?mc=EN_03_01), access on February 14, 2014).

<sup>33</sup> “IICH designees are those that are helpful in understanding the history and development of national life; those that embody the historical moment; those that have traditional style and technique; those that are artistically outstanding; those that are valuable for academic scholarship; those that are characterized by locality; and those that are in danger of disappearing and thus losing their cultural value” (Cultural Heritage Administration, available at the website <http://english.cha.go.kr>, access in August 2012).

younger generations in its practice; they are required to present the heritage to the public once a year, or whenever requested by the government.<sup>34</sup>

As of 2013, the Cultural Heritage Administration had designated 119 IICH, beginning with *Jongmyo jeryeak* (royal ancestral ritual and music at *Jongmyo Shrine*) in 1964 (Cultural Heritage Administration 2013a). Categories include “music,” “dance,” “*yeonhui*” (here specifically referring to theatrical play involving masked dance), “ritual,” “*nori*” (folk play/game), and “martial arts.” As of 2013, there were 108 *boyuja* (holders of art; often called “human treasures”) in 67 genres (ibid.). There are six regional *pungmul* styles designated as Important Intangible Cultural Heritage No. 11 under the “*nongak*” genre in the music category. Jinju-Samcheonpo *nongak*, associated with itinerant entertainment troupes and the military, was first designated as IICH in 1966. Pyeongtaek, also associated with *namsadang* troupes, and Iri, Gangneung, and Pilbong *nongak*, related to village rituals and agricultural contexts, were designated in the 1980s; Jansu *nongak*, associated with village ritual, was added in 2010.

The IICH designations in the music category generally include both aristocratic music (*jeongak*) and folk music (*minsokak*). Of 39 total *boyuja* in the music category, there are sixteen women (Cultural Heritage Administration 2013b). Earlier designations were geared toward men’s practices except for folk music genres such as *pansori* and *gayageum sanjo* which are performed by women and enjoyed by aristocrats. Women performers were later increasingly designated as IICH. However, IICH designations for the *nongak* genre remain male-dominated. According to the information on IICH transmitters (*jeonseungja*)—composed of *boyuja*, *boyuja*

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<sup>34</sup> Different monthly stipends are offered to practitioners depending on their role: as of 2013, 1,250,000-1,625,000 won in Korean currency (approximately \$1100-1500) to *boyuja* (holders of art); 625,000-875,000 won (\$550-800) to *boyuja* candidates and assistant trainers; and 250,000 won (\$220) to trainees who learned a heritage (Cultural Heritage Administration 2013a).

candidates, and assistant trainers—provided on the website of the Cultural Heritage Administration, as of February 2014 the *nongak boyuja* and assistant trainers were all men, except for one female assistant trainer in the Pyeongtaek *nongak* group (Refer to Table II-1).

	designated year	current jeonseungja	all jeonseungja (including those deceased)
<b>Jinju-Samcheonpo</b>	1966	8 (all men)	11 (all men)
<b>Pyeongtaek</b>	1985	7 (6 men and one woman assistant trainer)	13 (12 men and one women assistant trainer)
<b>Iri</b>	1985	4 (all men)	6 (all men)
<b>Gangneung</b>	1985	5 (all men)	8 (all men)
<b>Pilbong</b>	1988	4 (all men)	8 (all men)
<b>Jansu</b>	2010	no individuals	no individuals

**Table II-1:** Analysis of *nongak* designated as IICH

This may reflect the “traditional” practice associating *nongak* with village rituals, the agricultural labor system, and the military context, all of which were male-centric or male-dominated. At the same time, it does not represent women’s increasing participation in *nongak* in recent decades. As noted in the previous section, the contributions of women were valued less by the national evaluation committee even though they maintained the legitimate practice of the regional *pungmul* style from older generations of male drummers. This suggests that “women as historical subjects, cultural producers, and communicative subjects were not valued in the male- and elite-dominant society” (Shin Nam-joo 2009). Women’s exclusion from *nongak* designated as IICH thus may reinforce the trend in which “emphasizing the significance of historical cultural heritages as social capital has been a process of raising men’s political role as a successor of history and culture” (Oh Miran 2007).

## College *Pungmul* in “Cultural Movements”

In the late 1970s, anti-government political activists, typically college students and intellectuals, aimed to reform Korean society based on leftist ideology, a desire for reunification with North Korea, and anti-Americanism. As with the government, these activists began to promote traditional culture as a means of redefining Koreanness (Min Eungi 2004: 114). This cultural movement involved college circles and teachers’ associations learning *minjung munhwa* (culture of the common people), including *talchum* (masked dance) in the 1970s, and *minyo* and *pungmul* in the 1980s.<sup>35</sup> *Pungmul* practices of the village community culture were seen as providing the ethos of “community culture” and “enthusiasm of the common people” with which the movement sought to align itself (Park Inbae 1987).

“Dure,” the *pungmul* club of Seoul National University, was instrumental in introducing drumming practices among college students in the 1980s. It was founded in 1969, not by student volunteers, but by a professor who felt that students in agriculture-related fields should know traditional culture relevant to agricultural life (Yoon Yeochang 7/22/10). The early members of Dure were mostly interested in *pungmul* itself and concentrated on learning and performing it; they got financial support from the school since they promoted the institution by winning prizes at the *nongak* competitions. From the mid-1970s on, however, they were involved in cultural movements as a form of resistance to Park Chung Hee’s dictatorship and the subsequent military

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<sup>35</sup> According to Lee So-young (2005), there were three kinds of anti-government movements centering on music: the cultural movement (*munhwa undong*), the protest song movement (*norae undong*), and the progressive composers’ movement. In scenes of the protest song movement in the 1980s, college students and working-class music groups were involved in composing and singing protest songs against the autocratic government and for the rights of the working class, farmers, and the poor. Korean composers, educated in Western classical music, also became involved in the nationalist movement, through the recreation of Korean-style opera and an emphasis on new compositions espousing tradition and national sentiments.

regime. They interacted with masked dance clubs at about 40 colleges in the 1970s, as well as *pungmul* clubs of several other colleges in the 1980s (Dure 2011).

Women were involved in this movement, but as with most pro-democracy and other progressive movements, they were commonly devalued by their male compatriots. According to Lee Jeongja (7/28/10), who entered college in 1985 and was a member of Dure, members played *pungmul* at any kind of pro-democracy demonstration, including *haksaeng undong* (lit. student movement) and *nodong undong* (lit. labor movement) in the 1980s; they also performed *pungmul* in collaboration with a theater club, with a theme of satirizing the depressing sociopolitical circumstances of the time. Lee Jeongja held a leadership role, taking charge of educating the first- and second-year students in sociopolitical knowledge; her male colleague led the playing of *pungmul*. She confessed that, had she been more conscious of herself as a woman in terms of the lack of women leading *pungmul*, she would have attempted that role instead. Lee Jeongja also claimed that the women's movement was discouraged in *haksaeng undong* circles because it would “distract” from the main concerns of democratization, labor, and unity.

Since the 1990s, as the government has become more “democratized”, pro-democracy *haksaeng undong* has declined. Therefore, college *pungmul* clubs have become more apolitical spaces where students learn percussion as a hobby rather than an ideological practice (Jin Jae Hong 2010). Furthermore, as job-seeking became more competitive because of the economic crisis of 1997, fewer college students joined clubs such as Dure (Dure 2011).

### **The Rise of *Samulnori***

*Samulnori* (lit. four instrument play), a modernized version of *pungmul* adapted for stage performance, was first performed by the group SamulNori—Kim Yongbae, Kim Duk Soo, Choi

Taehyeon, and Lee Jongdae—at Gonggan sarang, Seoul, in 1978.<sup>36</sup> The basic form of *samulnori* is a percussion quartet of *ggwaenggwari*, *jing*, *janggu*, and *buk*. The first-generation players in SamulNori arranged regional *pungmul* repertoires, concentrating on musical artistry; this appealed particularly to the younger generation in urban and diasporic settings in the 1980s. According to Kim Heon-Seon (2009), the success of *samulnori* can be attributed to, first, its adaptation of the gradual acceleration important to traditional Korean music aesthetics; second, its transformation of compositions and instrumentation to suit indoor stages; and third, the extraordinary artistry and virtuosity of the first-generation of *samulnori* players.<sup>37</sup> Other assessments emphasize that the “energy, speed, and even sex appeal” (Hesselink 2012) and “Western modern aesthetic” (Lee Soyoung 1999) of *samulnori* was attractive to contemporary audiences.

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<sup>36</sup> The first group to create and popularize the *samulnori* genre was SamulNori; I would differentiate SamulNori from the *samulnori* genre, following Katherine In-Young Lee (2012). The first-generation players in SamulNori, Kim Duk Soo, Kim Yongbae, Lee Kwang-Soo, and Choi Jongsil, began to play together in 1980; Kim Yongbae left in 1984, Choi Jongsil in 1989 and Lee Kwang-Soo in 1992 (SamulNori’s 30th Anniversary Committee 2009).

<sup>37</sup> Kim Heon-Seon sees *samulnori* as based on the principle that “it repeatedly and continuously shifts ‘tension and release’ by increasing speed” (Kim Heon-Seon 2009: 140).



**Figure II-5:** The first-generation of SamulNori players, Lee Kwang-Soo, Kim Duk Soo, Choi Jongsil and Kim Yongbae (bottom, from left); the reunion of SamulNori performers at 30th anniversary: Nam Gimun, Kim Duk Soo, Lee Kwang-Soo, and Choi Jongsil (above, from left) © Jungang ilbo

The first-generation of *samulnori* players had been involved in *namsadang* troupes, and observed it disappearing in the 1960s and the early 1970s (Kim Duk Soo 2007: 52-3).<sup>38</sup> Kim Duk Soo recalls that drumming practices were suppressed, partly because traditional performing arts were considered “superstitious” by the Saemaoul undong, and partly because *pungmul* was

<sup>38</sup> As the last generation of performers with *namsadang*, they not only learned *pungmul* but also studied traditional music at the national high school, specializing in traditional music (Kim Heon-Seon 2009: 129).

associated with anti-government demonstrations.<sup>39</sup> Kim Duk Soo sought to maintain the lineage of professional entertainment groups, and the first members of *samulnori* had a shared interest in creating a new style of drumming as a way of continuing drumming performance (ibid.: 178).

*Samulnori* incorporated what Korean society wanted to project in the late twentieth century—“powerful energy” and “speed” (Kim Ju Hong 5/27/11). This matches the intent behind governmental efforts to create an image of Korea that was global and powerful while at the same time distinctly and authentically Korean.<sup>40</sup> Notably, the new genre, which included performers sitting on stage, was easier for women to participate in. *Samulnori* performance in a sitting position omitted the *jaban dwijipgi*, the most physically demanding activity of *pungmul* performance in a standing position. In addition, since a *samulnori* group is often composed of four to ten performers, the *samulnori*’s *sangsoe* has a much easier task than the *pungmul*’s *sangsoe*, who usually oversees more than 30 performers.

From the 1980s through the early 1990s, a great number of amateur as well as professional drumming groups formed throughout the country to play *samulnori*. This dominance of *samulnori* in the performance field has passed now; few current drumming groups perform only *samulnori* repertoire. Nevertheless, *samulnori* remains present in the fields of education and performance, a product of its strong contribution to the general public’s interest in Korean drumming and traditional performing arts in general. In tandem with the rise of *samulnori*, many *changjak* (lit. composition) percussion groups, such as Puri, Gongmyoung,

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<sup>39</sup> The Saemaeul undong and IICH, both of which the government promoted, are contradictory in that the former basically devalued “tradition” and the latter valued it. Despite the government’s IICH system and intellectuals’ cultural movement, the public consciousness has been still influenced by the conceptualization of considering shamanic and village rituals superstitious.

<sup>40</sup> The “masculinization” of *samulnori* will be discussed in Chapter III.



Noreum Machi, and Dulsori have formed, most performing not only traditional drumming but also creating new drumming styles and sometimes incorporating foreign percussion instruments.

In recent years, traditional drumming has been employed in the commercial sector, and percussion-based theater performances have emerged and gained popularity among foreign audiences as well as Korean. “Nanta,” proposed as a “non-verbal theatrical performance based on *samulnori* rhythmic patterns,” on the model of hugely popular Western shows such as “Stomp,” “Tap Dogs,” and Blue Man Group’s “Tubes,” pursues universal appeal and at the same time essential Koreanness (Choi and Jo 2006: 178). The creative team of Nanta arranged for performers to be trained by Kim Duk Soo’s *samulnori* group (ibid.).<sup>41</sup> “Nanta” debuted in 1997 in Seoul to tremendous success; it later appeared on Broadway in 2004-2005, and is now performing at three theaters in Seoul, where it is the sole program. Due to the company’s successful alliance with major tour companies, 80-90 % of the audience is comprised of foreign tourists from Asia (Lee Piljae 2008). According to Song Seunghwan, the CEO of PMC Productions, which created “Nanta,” its success comes from its combination of “non-verbal theater play,” “family orientation,” and “good marketing” (ibid.: 46). Choi and Jo (2006) attribute its success to the universal theme of cooking, Korean rhythms, and the comical and witty characters. However, even though “Nanta” might contribute to the popularization of drumming performance among the public, some drummers in the field warn of the negative effects of its popularity, as Korean drumming has come to emphasize “performance” aspects above musicianship.

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<sup>41</sup> It is rumored that some of the first performers were professional drummers, although later performers were not.

## Women's Participation in Drumming in Recent Decades

In recent decades, the general public's interest in drumming, the result of governmental support for traditional music, intellectuals' awareness of folk culture, and *samulnori*'s popularity throughout the 1970s-1980s, has culminated in widespread participation in learning and practicing of drumming in various educational institutes. As women's participation in the public sphere and education has increased, their participation in such programs has increased as well, through schooling (from kindergarten to college for married women), Intangible Cultural Heritage transmission centers, national *gugak* centers, cultural centers, and private drumming organizations. Some women maintain their drumming practice by joining drumming groups and drumming-based communities, while students might be trained as professional drummers through programs at colleges.

### Drumming Majors in Colleges

Since compulsory education began in 1953, Korean women have participated in various fields within the public sphere and increasingly pursued higher education. In 1965, there were 23,761 women in higher education institutions, 22.5% of the total enrollment; by 2013, that number had risen to 1,574,495 (42.4%), according to data provided by the Korean Educational Development Institute (refer to Table II-2).<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> These statistics are based on data from the *Statistical Yearbook of Education* and *Brief Statistics on Korean Education*, available from the Korean Educational Statistics Service (<http://kess.kedi.re.kr/index>) of the Korean Educational Development Institute, under the government's Department of Education, accessed on February 14, 2014.

Year	No. of women in higher education	Percentage
1965	23,761	22.5
1970	47,946	26.9
1975	66,394	27.8
1980	148,076	24.1
1985	367,216	29.9
1990	453,511	30.4
1995	848,145	36.2
2000	1,286,762	38.3
2005	1,399,931	39.4
2010	1,524,603	41.8
2013	1,574,495	42.4

**Table II-2:** Women in higher education institutes

The first *gugak* program was founded at Seoul National University in 1959.<sup>43</sup> This was followed by programs at a couple of universities in Seoul in the 1970s and several universities throughout the country in the 1980s (Park So-hyun 2009). Yeo Yujung (2007) lists the entrance quota of *gugak* majors entering two-year and four-year colleges as, respectively, 120 and 812 as of 2007. *Gugak* majors are predominantly women; according to the *gugak* department of Seoul National University, over the last four years women have comprised 56.2-82.7% of students entering their *gugak* program.<sup>44</sup> According to a *gugak* major at Ewha Women's University, there were about 20-30 men among the 150 students at the Gugak National High School she went to in the early 2000s, although she observed that male students have increased since then.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>43</sup> The first program in traditional Korean music was established at Duksung Women's University in 1954, but lasted only two years because there were not enough applicants (Park So-hyun 2009). Programs in traditional Korean music are often called *gugak* (lit. national music) department, and sometimes *jeontong eumak* (lit. traditional music) or *hanguk eumak* (lit. Korean music) department, depending on the school.

<sup>44</sup> According to *Mungyo tonggye yeonbo* in 1990, female students majoring in *gugak* or *gugak* scholarship in colleges comprised 1,215 (79%) and 249 (87%) of the programs, respectively (Park Yeonghye 1993).

<sup>45</sup> She also mentioned a tendency for teachers to push male students to learn wind or percussion instruments at Gugak National Middle School.

	1st year students	men	women	women's ratio
2010	29	5	24	82.7
2011	32	14	18	56.2
2012	29	7	22	75.8
2013	32	11	21	65.6

**Table II-3:** First-year students in the *gugak* program at Seoul National University

Women studying *gugak* might have been influenced by the rise in status of *gugak* musicians due to the ICH system and the creation of a *gugak* major at Seoul National University, the most prestigious college in Korea. This shift was particularly necessary for women interested in *gugak*, due to the negative image of women performers related to *gisaeng* (Jang Hee Sun 2011).<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, social convention holds that studying music is a woman's pursuit; the view of women who study *gugak* is akin to that of women who study Western classical music,<sup>47</sup> while studying music is considered improper for men who are expected to pursue stable and lucrative careers to support their families. Often, students of Western classical music carry the image of "the upper class"; women studying music are generally favored by men since they are believed to be "well-educated" and more socially refined (Choi SetByol 2002).<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Many women entertainers in the early twentieth century came from *gisaeng* or trained in *gisaeng* guilds. During this time, even though some became "stars" along with the development of modern theaters and the recording industry, *gisaeng* did not gain respect as musicians, as Japanese colonial law blurred the boundary between "*gisaeng*" and "*changgi*" (prostitute). Indeed, *gisaeng* guilds were abolished in 1947 under the reasoning that they were involved in prostitution (Kwon Do Hee 2001).

<sup>47</sup> Those involved in Western classical music are, however, still seen as "higher" than those in *gugak*.

<sup>48</sup> A survey of women music majors who graduated from Seoul National University and Ewha Women's University between 1965-1990 found that they received support from their mothers, usually upper-class, because: (1) their daughters liked it (29.8%), (2) music studies made them look accomplished and high-status (18.2%), (3) they wanted their daughters to marry well (18.2%), (4) it was comparatively easier to enter the best schools as a music major (15.9%) (Choi SetByol 2002).

The schools with *gugak* programs did not offer *taak* (lit. percussion instruments) majors until the late 1980s (Yeo Yujung 2007).<sup>49</sup> The first schools to establish *taak* majors generally concentrated on teaching drumming techniques as an accompaniment for music for the upper class, court music, and folk music including *pansori* (with *buk* accompaniment) and *sanjo* (with *janggu* accompaniment). Later, some schools started to incorporate the *samulnori* repertoire in their curriculum, and others concentrated on *samulnori*. Generally, *taak* major programs have admitted between five and ten incoming students each year; those geared towards drum accompaniment accept two or three students per year. Since the late 1990s, *yeonhui* (lit. performance for entertainment) programs that teach regional *pungmul* styles have been established as well. Among the 22 four-year colleges and universities that have *gugak* programs, a few schools—including the “*yeonhui*” program at Korean National University of Arts, the “*taak yeonhui*” program at Chungang University, and the “*jeontong* (traditional) *yeonhui*” program at Sehan University—provide a *pungmul* curriculum (ibid.).

The Korean National University of Arts offers an example of the curricula such programs offer and the gender ratios typically seen among drumming majors. The school is notable for training large numbers of women professional drummers; I have seen many graduates active in the performing field. The Korean National University of Arts (*hanguk yesul jonghap hakgyo*; often called Hanyejong or yejong in abbreviation), founded in 1998, offers a *yeonhui* program with four areas of specialization: *pungmul*, shamanic rituals, masked dance, and performances by itinerant entertainment troupes. The *yeonhui* majors learn *samulnori*, *pungmul*, shamanic rituals’ performance, masked dance, and itinerant entertainment troupes’ performance as requirements,

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<sup>49</sup> Students usually choose a *taak*, *jeontong taak* (traditional percussion), or *yeonhui* (lit. performance for entertainment) program when learning traditional drumming at colleges.

regardless of their specialization. The *pungmul* curriculum includes a few regional *pungmul* styles—for example, Mueul *nongak* as southeastern regional *pungmul* and Jeongeup *nongak* as southwestern regional *pungmul*—taught directly by the leaders of those *pungmul* groups.

Currently, the program admits approximately fifteen students per year.<sup>50</sup> Table II-4 lists the *yeonhui* majors who registered in the fall semester of 2013.<sup>51</sup> According to the table, six to eight of the fifteen students are women; this proves the assertion by some current students (as of 2011) that the gender ratio of entering students grew more even in the late 2000s. In contrast, the number of male students fluctuates from four to fourteen; the larger numbers of male students among the second- and third-year students in Table II-4 may represent the inclusion of those returning from military service.<sup>52</sup>

	female	male
1st year	8	6
2nd year	6	14
3rd year	7	10
4th year	8	4

**Table II-4:** Number of *yeonhui* majors at Hanyejong registering in FA13

When *yeonhui* majors graduate, they are sometimes recruited by some famous drumming groups and *pungmul* groups affiliated with the government, form drumming or *yeonhui* groups themselves, or return their home city and become involved in the transmission of Intangible Cultural Heritages.

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<sup>50</sup> Entering students often include those who already learned specific performing art designated as Intangible Cultural Heritage by the government and those who were trained in drumming at *gugak*-specializing high schools.

<sup>51</sup> This set of data was provided by the *yeonhui* department at Hanyejong.

<sup>52</sup> Male college students usually do military service after finishing the second year, and return as third-year students; occasionally they go after the first or third year.

## Drumming Education in Public Schools

In recent decades, *pungmul* and/or *samulnori* have been taught in many elementary, middle, and high schools, in part because of the availability of teachers. Having been involved in college *pungmul* and cultural movements, many *pungmul* players have continued to practice through teaching *pungmul*. Furthermore, specialists such as *gugak* graduates, *gugak* performers with more than ten years experience, and those trained in Intangible Cultural Heritages regularly teach traditional music as part-time instructors in elementary, middle, and high schools through the government system of *gugak gangsa pulje* (lit. pool system for instructors of traditional music).

The *gangsa pulje*, initiated in 2000, was intended to make it possible for students to develop their interests and talents in extra-curricular classes (teukgi jeokseong sueop).<sup>53</sup> The 2002 revised textbooks in primary and secondary education included much more content on traditional music than previous versions. Because school music teachers generally know Western classical music but do not have much knowledge of *gugak*, *gugak* specialists typically are involved in the classes (Kim Min Young 2008). This system is both positively and negatively regarded by *gugak* specialists: while musicians without stable jobs can get paid regularly, opportunities are not equally distributed; furthermore, teaching may sap their passion for performing (Kim Haeng-on 2004). Nonetheless, such specialized education has helped students be exposed to, become interested in, and appreciate traditional music.

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<sup>53</sup> As of 2010, this pool system for instructors in arts also included specialists from the fields of theater, film, dance, animation, crafts, design, and photography. According to the government's research data of *gangsa* pool in 2010, 25,436 schools had 4156 instructors—3,306 at elementary schools, 215 at middle schools, 522 at high schools, and 104 at schools for disabled children. Instructors in traditional Korean music are 1568, or 37.7% of the total; women comprise 1265 (80%) among 1568 *gugak* instructors, which reflects women's domination among *gugak* major students and professionals (Korea Arts and Culture Education Service 2010).

Among the various genres of traditional music, *samulnori* has been the most favored by students (ibid.). By learning drumming, the students not only enjoy “performing at the competitions” and “collaborating with classmates,” but also feel “proud of learning traditional culture” (Min Miran 2010: 81). According to what Yim Mijoung told me and what I found from interactions with young drummers, some of those who studied *pungmul/samulnori* in school have gone on to study *taak* or *yeonhui* at college.

A teacher (10/23/11) that I met at the *samulnori* competition organized by Kim Duk Soo in 2011 has been in charge of the *samulnori* class in Sangdaewon elementary school, Bundang, Gyeonggi province for four years; the previous year, her students received the grand prize at the *gugak* competition for children. The extra-curricular *samulnori* class that she taught was mostly composed of fifth- and sixth-grade girls; she explained that they had a class during lunch break when boys tended to do activities such as playing soccer. She usually taught *janggu* first and then let her class learn what they were most interested in. Emphasizing that as societal consciousness has changed, and parents and teachers do not give as much importance to gender-specific education, she notes, “girls are not weaker than boys in a physical sense, but rather quicker than boys in learning drumming, articulating what they learned, and getting fun out of it.” In contrast, according to her, boys often quit before they reach the point where they enjoy learning it (10/23/11).

Yim Mijoung (4/27/11), a *taak* graduate who, as of 2011, had taught traditional music in elementary and middle schools in Seoul for eight years through *gangsae pulje*, shared her observations on the transformation in how students have chosen instruments to learn. When she started teaching, students tended to differentiate instruments according to conceptions of what is male or female; for example, when she demonstrated playing *buk*, the children would ask “Isn’t



it supposed to be played by men?” Later, “girls who liked the sophisticated” chose to learn *janggu*, whereas “boys who were believed to be strong and liked showing their physical power” chose *buk*. However, with students more often choosing instruments based on their own personalities rather than gender, many girls want to learn *buk* and noisy *ggwaenggwari*. To encourage this development, Yim Mijoung has developed a unique method in assigning instruments. She does not tell students who should play what, but explains the role of each instrument: she introduces *jing* as “embracing,” *ggwaenggwari* as “leading,” *janggu* as ideal for “those who like changes,” and *buk* for “those who can use physical power but keep the beat.” However, even though she does not practice gendered instrument assignment, her wording still implies to some extent that the role of instruments is gendered.

### **Drumming Education through Non-academic Programs**

Drumming is also taught outside of the school system—for example, through Intangible Cultural Heritage transmission centers, *gugak* centers, cultural centers, continuing education programs, and private drumming organizations. Since 2007, the government, as an extension of *gangsapa*, also supports artists for teaching and performing their artistic skills at institutions for those who are marginalized, such as orphanages, day care centers, senior centers, institutions for the disabled, and organizations for immigrants (Korea Arts and Culture Education Service 2010).

Starting in the 1990s, many *pungmul/samulnori* classes have been offered at cultural centers (*munhwa senteo*) and local governmental centers for residents (*jumin jachi senteo*). Cultural centers, often affiliated with department stores or broadcasting companies, provide programs of leisure and arts to adults, mostly married women, and local governments offers

various programs for children and adults. There are also numerous programs specifically for women: continuing education programs provided at the colleges for married women (*jubudaehak*), the YMCA and YWCA, as well as those at centers for women (*yeoseong hoegwan*) and Korean Womenlink (*minuhoe*). These organizations usually provide health-related programs such as swimming, yoga, and sports dance; self-development programs for learning computers, languages, and arts; programs preparing for childbirth and child care; and programs for learning traditional culture such as *pungmul* and traditional dances (Lee Bo-Sun et al. 2001). According to a survey, 90% of students who take traditional Korean dance are women over age 40; they speak of the advantages in their physical and mental health as well as a positive attitude toward life (Song Moonsook 1994). For instance, Jeong Sunrye (59 years old in 2011; 10/23/11), a member of a married women's *pungmul* group in Suwon city since 1994, declared that she was able to enjoy her life more through drumming as it increased her mental and physical health.



**Figure II-6:** *Seoljangu* (*janggu* performance incorporating dance movement) class at National Gugak Center, Seoul

Moon Seoni (b. 1958; 07/18/08), who organized the National Married Women's Pungmul Competition fourteen times before 2010, believes that Dangnaru, which she helped create, was the first amateur women's *pungmul* group in the country. The group was formed with other women from the same apartment complex in Dangjin city in 1989; they had learned *pungmul* at the college for married women. Moon Seoni aimed to encourage women, especially married ones, to enjoy their life and to resolve stress by drumming. When her group participated in the national *pungmul* competition for the first time, the evaluation committee looked at them "interestingly" and gave them extra points because women's groups were rare. According to her, the situation has changed: the majority of *pungmul* groups at the competitions now are married women's groups.

### **Women's Participation in *Nongak***

Eventually women also began to participate in regional *pungmul* practice, once predominantly a male realm. From my observation of five *nongak* groups designated as IICH who performed at Gangneung *danoje* held in May 2011, most included seven to thirteen women among about 30 performers. In Table II-5, the numbers in parentheses are those of female performers. Generally, women tended to play *soe* and *janggu* more than *buk*. *Soe* players in each group had a range of gender ratios, although the *sangsoe* were all men except in the Pyeongtaek *nongak* group. Generally, *sogo* players with *ggot-sangmo* (a conical hat, decorated with paper flowers), who use less physically demanding dance movements, were mostly women, whereas *sogo* players with *chae-sangmo* (a spinning-tasseled hat with a long ribbon), who perform acrobatics such as *jaban dwijipgi*, were mostly men.

	total	soi	jing	janggu	buk	sogo with ggot-sangmo	sogo with chae-sangmo	japsaek /mudong
<b>Jinju-Samcheonpo</b>	27 (7)	4 (3)	3 (1)	5 (2)	5 (0)	—	10 (1)	—
<b>Pyeongtaek</b>	23 (6)	2 (1)	2 (1)	4 (3)	3 (1)	—	12 (0)	6 (6)
<b>Iri</b>	25 (9)	4 (2)	2 (0)	6 (2)	2 (0)	5 (5)	6 (0)	—
<b>Gangneung</b>	30 (11)	2 (1)	1 (0)	2 (2)	3 (1)	8 (5)	7 (2)	7(7)
<b>Pilbong</b>	33 (13)	4 (0)	2 (0)	8 (4)	4 (2)	9 (7)	6 (0)	—

**Table II-5:** Performers of five *nongak* groups

Performers in the Jinju-Samcheonpo and Pyeongtaek *nongak* groups were younger than those in the Iri, Gangneung, and Pilbong *nongak* groups. I found later that the performers in the Jinju-Samcheonpo *nongak* group were college *yeonhui* majors who learned drumming from the leader of that group; those in the Pyeongtaek *nongak* group were drumming-major graduates or professionals employed by the city of Pyeongtaek. These two *nongak* groups might have demanded young performers who could perform more acrobatics and physically intense techniques, since these groups were associated with itinerant entertainment troupes. The *nongak* groups associated with village rituals and the communal labor system tended to have non-professional elderly members from their villages.



**Figure II-7:** Pyeongtaek *nongak*'s performance at Gangneung *danoje*

Cho Jin-Young, a government official who organizes performances of traditional music in governmental venues in Seoul, observes that it is typical for women to comprise one third of the *nongak* members in these groups:

Since involvement in *nongak* does not make money, men look for a job and cannot concentrate on it. That is why *nongak* preservation societies usually supply women for the shortage. There is an exception that many men are involved in Pyeongtaek and Anseong *nongak* groups that get stable income from the city. (8/12/10)

Cho Jin-Young implies that these *nongak* groups are still male-dominated, noting that “it will be hard for women to lead a *nongak* group as *sangsoe*, even if women have been increasing in terms of quality and quantity.”

Yang Jinseong, the *sangsoe* of Pilbong *nongak* group, sees the increasing presence of women in *nongak* as positive. He recalls that there was only one woman involved in Pilbong *nongak* for one or two years when his father was a *sangsoe*. He observes that women began to

join his *nongak* group when he was a *sangsoe*, and believes that *nongak* has become “softer” since then. He continues:

I observe that it is women rather than men who can afford the time. This is inevitable social change. Isn't it great to make a harmony with women?...I usually give women such proper roles as *sogo* player or food preparation, which is appropriate for women's sophistication. Since *janggu* demands physical power, I assign *janggu* to men. Pilbong *nongak* tastes unsophisticated/coarse, as it can be expressed in the footsteps of a farmer carrying an A-frame on his back. (8/19/10)

Although he likes having more women in *nongak*, Yang Jinseong continues to limit women's roles based on the conception that they are “more delicate.” He appreciates women in *nongak* largely for what they bring to “female” roles.

### **Women's Participation in Drumming-based Communities**

Women also participate in private drumming organizations that build community while teaching and performing regularly. For instance, Sinmyung nanum (lit. excitement sharing) and Teo-ullim (lit. ground reverberating) present “village rituals” for Seoul citizens. Sinmyung nanum was formed as a *pungmul* group (Seoul *pungmulguthoe*) in 2003, and later became involved in teaching *pungmul* and sharing “culture”; the project has expanded since 2010 to sharing financial support for those in marginal circumstances, particularly with the intention of promoting peace and unity between North and South Korea. There are 150 members, including those who only provide financial support. The members are from different backgrounds, but are predominantly women. Many teachers and married women joined the organization for the drumming opportunities it provided because the director, Noh Suhwan, has taught drumming for communities of teachers, Korean Womenlink, and continuing education programs. There are some women in their fifties and sixties who wanted to learn drumming when they were young but waited until raising children; some older men also come to learn drumming, usually after



work. The programs are predominantly drumming classes, but also teach dance and folk songs. In addition to three annual concerts, Sinmyung nanum gives *samulnori* performances on Sundays at the group's venue; they have several four-member *samulnori* teams performing in rotation (see Figure II-8). According to staff members Kim Mihyeon and Lee Eunsuk (10/5/11), the members are generally “passionate about learning”; they are often complimented by the audience on their ability to perform both the sitting and standing repertoires, which is not easy for amateurs. During their biggest concert in the fall, they do not aim to just perform, but rather create “*pungmulgut* or village ritual for Seoul citizens” by giving space for their own members and the visitors to wish for goodluck.



**Figure II-8:** *Samulnori* performance by the women's team of Sinmyung nanum

Teo-ullim was founded in 1984 by members of college clubs for *pungmul* and folk song—Dure from Seoul National University and the folk song club from Sungshin Women's University. Since the mid-1980s, they have been involved in cultural movements; as one of the

best, most stable, and oldest social clubs made up of non-professionals, they have played an important role in making *pungmul* available for the general public. According to Hong Seongmin, one of the directors, they remain interested in social issues such as labor, education, women, and the environment; for example, they have been involved in supporting marginally situated people such as recently fired part-time workers,<sup>54</sup> and participated in the demonstrations opposing the environmentally unfriendly “reconstruction of Korean’s four main rivers” planned by the government. As of 2011, there are 120 members; there is a wide range of age groups with more members in their 30s and 40s, while the gender ratio is almost even. They drum at the annual performance as well as at some local festivals and other events.

Teo-ullim seeks to create “*dosigut* (lit. city ritual),” or contemporary rituals for urban residents, by incorporating traditional elements of village rituals. On October 2, 2011, Teo-ullim gave an annual performance at the playground of an elementary school in the northwestern district of Seoul. It began with a procession ritual (*gilnori*) around noon and finished with *daljip taeugi* (lit. burning *daljip*) in the evening.<sup>55</sup> They presented the performance for entertainment with *pangut* and folk song, and had attendees participate in folk games and a marketplace for food and drink as if it was a village festival. Toward the end, all the participants, each carrying a bamboo pole, walked in a circle around the “*dangsan*” temporally made by the participants through a folk game (see Figure II-9); the bamboo was then collected in the *dangsan*, which was eventually burned. The director and producer of the event, Hong Seongmin, said that it is a place

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<sup>54</sup> In Korea, unions attempt to protect workers who have been fired from part-time jobs, as the increasingly common practice of hiring people part-time is due in part to the greater ease with which employers can fire part-time rather than full-time workers.

<sup>55</sup> This practice is from the tradition that villagers used to burn trees that were easily found or dead in the village to wish for a bright year on January 15 by the lunar calendar. Teo-ullim chose bamboo because it is easy to carry and quick to grow.



where people can resolve the stress they had throughout the year by drinking and enjoying the performance. They have been doing this ritual since 1996, but she said they were now trying to include more local residents in the ritual, since “solidarity with the working class and college students has been in danger of breaking up because of the neoliberal society” (Hong Seongmin 11/2/11).<sup>56</sup>



**Figure II-9:** Spectators’ participation in carrying a bamboo pole and playing percussion at Teo-ullim’s *pungmul* performance

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<sup>56</sup> She commented that “the college culture disappeared and working-class unions have been insecure since neoliberalism occupied Korean society,” so it is hard to create solidarity with them.

## Conclusion

Korean drumming was a male realm within the public spheres of village rituals and agricultural communal labor until the mid-twentieth century. However, as drumming was increasingly performed by professionals as entertainment, and as women entertainers expanded their repertoire due to the sociocultural transformations, women involved in entertainment troupes came to practice Korean drumming in the late 1950s-1970s. The synergy of government policy, cultural movement, and *samulnori* engendered the public's interest in drumming in the 1980s, thus leading to the promotion of drumming education throughout the country in the 1990s. In this environment, drumming education could be pursued regardless of gender; women have taken advantage of the opportunity, and are now commonly involved in drumming in both rural and urban settings. Traditional drumming by male village members has thus transformed into a professional endeavor, and further broadened to encompass practice by both professionals and amateurs. In this transformation, women gained access to active participation in the previously male realm of drumming.

### Chapter III. Gendered Conceptions of Korean Drumming: The “Masculinity” of *Pungmul* and *Samulnori*

On September 2, 2011, I attended “Gugak gillajabi: Janggu” (Traditional music guide: Janggu), a concert performed at Folk Theater Pungryu in Seoul and organized by the Korean Cultural Heritage Foundation, a governmental organization. Of approximately 150 seats arranged in a semi-circle, half were taken. The concert, one of a series on Korean traditional instruments and the performing arts in which those instruments play a significant role, began with an introduction to the *janggu* and a demonstration of how to make the instrument. This was followed by drum-oriented performances by the group Taedong and guest performers, including *samulnori*, shamanic drumming, and drum dance.

For the first piece, four young performers in their teens and twenties sat on the floor playing a *samulnori* piece with the *janggu*. One of the players was a woman; her performance persona was different from that of the men with whom she played. Even though she was smaller in terms of body size, her powerful *chuimsae* (vocal interjections), smile, self-confident expression, and energetic body movements were quite impressive next to the men’s rather rigid expressions and movements. The audience participated by clapping their hands when the performers played *janggu* in a rapid mode, and sometimes by shouting complimentary *chuimsae*—e.g. “*eo!ssigu*” (an exclamation of encouragement), “*jotta*” (lit. great), “*jalhanda*” (lit. good job).

After the *samulnori* performance, the male master of ceremonies (MC), a *pansori* singer often featured as a guest speaker on entertainment TV programs and as a DJ for radio programs, singled out the woman drummer:

What a great performance! Please applaud for them. It was performed by three men and one woman. As far as I know, she is a single. [some laughing sound from the audience]

When she gets married, her husband will have trouble. [laughing] When he does not follow her, she will be using *janggu* sticks. [laughing]

His comment illustrates how women drummers are often perceived and treated as performers. Certainly her performance was impressive; even disregarding her gender, she presented a “charismatic aura” in her drumming, movement, shouts of encouragement, and articulate facial expressions, whereas the men she performed with were inexperienced students and focused on technical drumming skills alone. Her performance style was very much what audiences can expect from other professional *samulnori* performers.

However, the master of ceremonies read this—or at least presented it—more as scarily “aggressive” than complimentary of her power. He might carry a personal prejudice against women drummers, considering his background as a student and performer of *gugak*. Regardless of his motives, however, the audience laughed in response to his commentary. This can be interpreted in different ways. The audience might be reacting to the “physical strength” considered out of character for women but necessary for performance, under the same logic in which mass media programs use “fat” or “unpretty” women as comedic fodder. She was conceptualized as so “physically strong” that she might be violent toward her future husband. Similarly, the audience might enjoy imagining that the woman, acting outside of traditional gendered parameters, can overpower the men. Either way, the audience’s response implies that a woman drummer who is “physically strong” and thus “aggressive” is not usual, normal, or standard. The dynamics of the master of ceremonies’ remarks and the audience’s reaction to them suggest that drumming, with its demand for physical power, is a men’s realm, revealing a conceptualization of Korean drumming that demands a purportedly unfeminine physical power. Such assumptions about gendered drumming are normalized, naturalizing the practice as male.

In this chapter, I examine how Korean drumming is often construed as “masculine” in relation to physicality and to masculinized women drummers, by exploring (women) drummers’ experiences and conceptions of gendered drumming. The first section of this chapter examines what kinds of gender constructions are at play in Korean drumming, and the way in which people project the concept of *eum* and *yang* in music-making and associate certain instruments with gender. The second section surveys how professional drummers, mostly women, perceive, experience, and evaluate physicality in drumming and whether or not gender plays a role. The third section demonstrates the normalization of women drummers’ becoming “masculinized” to adjust to and fit in with the male-dominant, hierarchical drumming culture. Finally, I explore *samulnori* as a manifestation of masculinization that developed along with political violence and a national demand for a “powerful image” during the 1980s.

### **Gendered Ways of Seeing Korean Drumming**

Gendering is frequently practiced in the discourse on Korean drumming. People use gendered terms and expressions when referring to drumming<sup>57</sup>: they often add a prefix that specifies gender to names of pairs of instruments and of people who play as a duo; likewise, “feminine” and “masculine” are used to describe particular regional *pungmul* styles or *pansori* drumming. Korean drumming is typically discussed through the terms of “*eum*” and “*yang*”: percussion instruments are spoken of as containing strong “*yang*” energy, and this theoretical framework may guide the development of ways of performing or music-making.

The prefixes that identify female and male—respectively “*am*” and “*su(t)*”—are often attached to names of instruments or duet performers. For example, a *soe* is designated as either

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<sup>57</sup> The Korean language itself does not gender nouns.

*am-soe* or *sut-soe* when two *soe* players perform a call and response form. In the *pungmul* context, “high-pitched, strong” *sut-soe* is played by a leading *soe* player, while “low-pitched, warm, soft” *am-soe* is played by the secondary *soe* player (Noh Suhwan 2008). Likewise, “*am-gosu sut-myeongchang* (lit. female drummer and male singer)” is a standard phrase for *pansori* performance, regardless of the performers’ genders. This does not necessarily mean that woman and man play the role of drummer and singer, respectively, but rather symbolizes the “symmetrical relationship between the performers,” sometimes in analogy to the balance of *eum* and *yang*, which produces the characteristic tension in *pansori* through a process of “pushing and pulling” (Lee Yoon Sun 2011: 113).

Drumming styles are also described as “feminine” or “masculine,” again regardless of the performers’ gender. Regional *pungmul* drumming style is often treated as presenting both characteristics in opposition. For example, southwestern *pungmul* (Honam udo *nongak*) is “feminine” and “soft,” whereas southeastern *pungmul* (yeongnam *nongak*) is “masculine” and “energetic.” The factor determining a stylistic “gender” is often the use of a certain instrument or *nori*.<sup>58</sup> Thus, southwestern *pungmul* is often called “feminine” because it is characterized by developed *janggu* performance and *bupo*<sup>59</sup> *nori*, while southeastern *pungmul* gains the appellation “masculine” because it is dominated by *buk* performance and technical *beoggu*<sup>60</sup> *nori*. The following pictures (Figure III-1 and III-2) show these distinct styles: the first

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<sup>58</sup> “*Nori*” literally means “play.” In the context of *pungmul*, “*nori*” generally refers to a performance centering on the lead player of an instrument, or a group of those players; surrounded by other performers, these players focus on demonstrating the highest quality technique and artistry possible with that instrument.

<sup>59</sup> *Bupo* is a large, white feathery ornament symbolizing a flower, which is attached to the *sangmo* of *soe* players in the southwestern region. *Pungmul* players wear different types of hats—*chae-sangmo*, *ggot-sangmo*, and *bupo-sangmo*. *Chae-sangmo* attach a white ribbon—sometimes shorter than a meter, sometimes longer than two meters—to a *sangmo*; *ggot-sangmo* is a conical hat decorated with paper flowers; and *bupo-sangmo* is a *sangmo* with *bupo*.

<sup>60</sup> *Beoggu* is a little bigger than *sogo* (a generic term for small drum).

illustrates *janggu* performance, one of the main repertoires, of Jeongeup *nongak*, representing southwestern *pungmul* style; the second shows *buk* performance, characterized by restless body movements and two-handed playing (as opposed to one-handed), in Mueul *nongak* from the southeastern region. The styles of *pansori* drumming are likewise described as “feminine” versus “masculine”: the *pansori* drumming style that presents the primary skeleton of rhythmic patterns is considered “masculine,” while that presenting decorative rhythmic patterns is seen as “feminine” (Choi Donghyeon 1992).



**Figure III-1:** *Janggu* performance, a rehearsal by Jeongeup *nongak* members





**Figure III-2:** *Buk* performance of Mueul *nongak*, by Hanyejong *yeonhui* majors

As in other musical genres, the standard process of gendering instruments and musical techniques used in Korean drumming is often explained as a product of *eum* and *yang*, a Confucian legacy. Kim Heon-Seon, a scholar specializing in *pungmul* and *samulnori*, sees *samulnori* as based on “balance of *eum* and *yang*,” along with “dynamics of tension and release.” He locates “*eum*” and “*yang*” in two metal (*soe*, *jing*) and two skin (*janggu*, *buk*) instruments, stating “the soft sound of skin instruments embraces the penetrating sound of metal instruments, sometimes confronting each other” (Kim Heon-Seon 1995: 140). He also sees the *janggu* itself as symbolizing *eum* and *yang*. The *janggu* used by right-handed players for *samulnori* has a female dog skin on the left drumhead and a male dog skin on the right drumhead (ibid.); the left drumhead is hit with a mallet for a low sound building a base, the characteristic *eum* sound; the right drumhead is hit with a thin stick to produce the high, penetrating *yang* sound while creating decorative rhythms (Figure III-3 shows a *janggu*, but the performer is left-handed).





**Figure III-3:** Kim Duk Soo playing *janggu* © Munhwa Ilbo

Performers such as Yu Kyung-Hwa emphasized the balance of *eum* and *yang* when they perform and teach drumming. Yu Kyung-Hwa, a female drummer and *cheolhyeongeum* (lit. metal string zither) player, was especially fervent about the theory of *eum* and *yang* in music-making, based on its Confucian conception:

The concept of *eum* and *yang* refers to contrasting things. Philosophically this can be different energies. When it comes to music, it can be sparsely notated versus densely notated, and forte versus piano, as examples of extremes in *eum* and *yang*, for example. This *eum* and *yang* should exist in music. Masters naturally present this. I think that *eum* and *yang* is the basis of music-making, in terms of rhythmic composition, musical presentation, musical color, and so on. Like a human life, *eum* and *yang* are intertwined to make the perfect Being, according to Asian philosophy. (Yu Kyung-Hwa 4/18/11)

Even though her concept of *eum* and *yang* is not strictly applied to gender, it still presupposes the division of gender roles in the musical realm. Yu Kyung-Hwa said that she has always had *eum* and *yang* in her mind when composing and performing, even using the terms when discussing how to perform. When teaching Gutgeori *jangdan* (rhythmic patterns based on four beats with

triple subdivisions), for example, she emphasized that the first two beats should be played with the energy of “*yang*,” powerfully, and the next two “*eum*,” softly.

Kim Ju Hong (5/27/11), a leader of the percussion group Noreum Machi, also believed that percussion instruments used in Korean drumming fundamentally would have “strong *yang* energy.” He used the example of the *jing*, which is usually buried under ground for three years to neutralize the instrument’s inherent *yang* with the *eum* found in soil. In this context, he commended the female member of his group, Oh Hyun-ju, for working in the male-dominant drumming field. Regarding the treatment of the metal instruments *jing* and *soe*, Park Eunha (10/7/11), a female drummer and dancer, explained that the main reason for encasing the instruments in soil would be to eliminate the gas formed when molten metal hardens. Nevertheless, she also maintained that metal instruments would be hard for women to deal with; she believed that women would need to have “strong energy”—without mentioning whether it was *eum* or *yang*—to play metal instruments. She added that that was why shamans have usually handled them.<sup>61</sup> The conceptions of Kim Ju Hong and Park Eunha demonstrate the naturalization of the concept that women cannot handle a percussion instrument of strong energy—often associated with “*yang*.”

The prevalence of gender terms and expressions in drumming and the application of “*eum* and *yang*” to instruments and music-making manifests the projection of internalized gender conceptions—the contrasting gender concepts of “women vs. men” and “feminine vs. masculine”—onto drumming. The belief that percussion instruments, conceived of as “strong,”

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<sup>61</sup> Shamans are often women, but they are perceived as different from other women, due to the conception that shamans have a supernatural power called *singi* (lit. deity’s energy) that allows them to mediating between deity/spirits and humans. The supernatural power gives these women the strength necessary to play metal instruments.

are associated with *yang* is particularly pervasive among drummers. This kind of normalized practice also reinforces the conceptualization of those binary concepts in daily life as well as the gendering of drumming.

### **Physicality in Korean Drumming**

The anecdote at the beginning of the chapter suggests the strength and wide acceptance of the concept that drumming's physical strength is linked to "masculinity." Drummers themselves discussed with me the physicality of Korean drumming. The discussions were generally based on their reactions to the ways in which I approached drumming as "masculine," specifically my perception that it has been predominantly performed by men and requires physical power.<sup>62</sup> The drummers who participated in these conversations are mostly women who have been involved in *pungmul*: a standing performance in which drummers carry and play instruments while walking, running, dancing, jumping, and swirling *sangmo*. *Pungmul* thus demands far more physical intensity than the *samulnori* repertoire or accompaniment drumming, which are generally performed in sitting position.

Some drummers highlighted the element of physicality as the basis of their drumming. Kim Haram, a female drummer of Dulsori, emphasized taking care of one's body through physical training, considering drummers to be similar to athletes. She thought that physical strength ("*cheryeok*") would be required for "full energy expressing the color of the performance" (8/20/11). Shin Heeyeon, a female drummer and the leader of Taedong, believed that physical strength ("*him*") would be the foundation of any kind of performance. Taking

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<sup>62</sup> If I had not asked, some of the drummers might not have addressed this issue. Nevertheless, as observed, throughout interactions with the drummers, physicality was generally one of the important elements in their performance.

figure skating as an example, she thought that the skater Kim Yuna's performance was as good as a man's, even though she completed fewer jumps. She saw the beauty of Kim Yuna's performance as accomplished after building "*him*" and "*gongnyeok*" (the energy that emerges after a long period of training).

Building up "*him*" is applicable to men, too. It might be easier to build up "*him*," but "*him*" is the basis of performing beautifully or freely. That is, "*him*" is the base on which to estimate when and how to present certain expressions. This is not only applicable to percussion instruments. Men can play instruments more "powerfully," but those who play well have already built *gongnyeok*. (Shin Heeyeon 8/20/11)

Shin Heeyeon believed that physical strength allowed her to do what she wanted to do on stage. She added that women's drumming would not be unusual any more, but women would need to take care of their physical strength and body shape, especially because women have rarely survived in the field after bearing children.

Some women drummers considered drumming "masculine" in that it "demanded physical power," and "appealed with its strength," which suggests that the drummers associated "masculinity" with physicality. Shin Heeyeon thought that drumming could be seen as "masculine" because of the energy required; drumming required so much energy from her that she usually got sick after performing. Yoo Sojeong, a female drummer and former *samulnori* group member, thought that men tended to have good muscles for performing a variety of physical feats. She described practicing *samulnori* as "I felt as if my legs and arms exploded, and neck fell out" (9/6/11). Hong Seongmin, a female *buk* player and the leader of the *pungmul* group Teo-ulim, located "masculinity" in the muscles used when playing *buk*—considered the most "masculine" of the four percussion instruments (*ggwaenggwari*, *jing*, *janggu*, and *buk*) used in Korean drumming:

Even though *janggu* or *sogo* can be described as feminine, they also require much physical strength. Considering the way the muscles are used and the flow of the

expression, however, *buk* is the most masculine. All the instruments demand physical strength, but one can clearly tell gender differences, specifically the shape of the muscle, when *buk* is performed. I found that it looks much better, in terms of the muscle or muscle size, when men play *buk*. Although women may play it with the same physical strength as men, those muscles are not presented in women and thus women do not look as good as men while playing. (Hong Seongmin 8/7/10)

She also shared the story of a female drummer in her fifties involved in Nalmoe *buk* dance from the southeastern region; the drummer experienced intermenstrual bleeding after “intense” performance. Her point seems to be that playing the *buk* is physically intense—and thus “masculine”—to the extent that it could do harm to a woman’s body. Despite her playing of the instrument, Hong Seongmin admitted that women have not usually been assigned to play *buk* in her group; it has been rare to see women playing *buk* in a mixed-gender group. This conception of *buk* as the most “masculine” percussion instrument is also manifested in trends in the specialities of current *yeonhui* students at the Korea National University of Arts: as of 2011, there was only one woman specializing in *buk*, while women were studying *janggu* and *ggwaenggwari* in almost the same numbers as men. According to those *yeonhui* students, the female *buk* player was valued not only for the rareness of women playing *buk*, but also for her skill.

Some women drummers, typically those performing with men, shared their experiences of feeling let down to some extent by their physical abilities; for them, gender was important to physicality. These drummers have been involved in *beoggu nori*—playing *beoggu* and performing acrobatic movements while wearing *chae-sangmo*. The *beoggu nori* is often considered the most difficult technique in terms of physicality because it requires more acrobatic

movements, and is almost always performed by men.<sup>63</sup> For example, *beoggu* players need to perform *jaban dwijipgi*—jumping and rotating counterclockwise while swirling the *chae-sangmo* with one’s head toward the center of the circle, with the back almost parallel to the ground (see Figure III-4).<sup>64</sup> The *beoggu* players usually play a small drum, but they are required to perform these physically demanding movements. Nam Pilbong, the leader of Bitnae *nongak* group, shared his opinion on the limitation of women regarding *jaban dwijipgi*:

The female members have limitations, particularly in *jaban dwijipgi*. One of the reasons why women tend to switch to the fusion style in percussion groups after majoring in *pungmul* is that women feel inadequate in *jaban dwijipgi* and physical strength when performing [such] techniques. I would not recommend to women to keep [drumming], but instead suggest switching to dance or playing melodic instruments. Since they developed rhythmic feeling with *taak* practice, they can do well with other instruments. (Nam Pilbong 7/30/10)

He also believes that a “woman’s hip is too heavy” to perform the technique well; in general, he approaches *jaban dwijipgi* as too difficult for women due to the unsuitability of women’s anatomy.

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<sup>63</sup> Some regional *pungmul* feature *sogo* players wearing a *goggal* (conical hat, usually decorated with paper flowers, worn by Buddhist dancers and some players in *pungmul* groups). These *sogo* players are usually women and perform less physically involved dance movements.

<sup>64</sup> *Jaban dwijipgi* used to be performed by the Jinju-Samcheonpo *nongak* group representing the southeastern *pungmul* (yeongnam *nongak*) associated with entertainment troupes, but is nowadays adopted by most regional *pungmul* groups. *Jaban dwijipgi* is also the movement for which the audience applauds the most.



**Figure III-4:** *Jaban dwijipgi* by women performers © Jungang Ilbo

Jeong Wonyeong, a female drummer and the leader of the women's percussion group DoDo, used to play *sogo* in the Seoul *namsadang* troupe; according to her, *jaban dwijipgi* was not a primary technique for *sogo* players in the troupe. She saw *jaban dwijipgi* as the only barrier for women in performing Korean drumming, although she was aware that women in *yeoseong nongakdan* (in the late 1950s-70s) were proficient in *jaban dwijipgi* and that women junior to her have been performing it well these days. She still did not think that women could perform it as well as men, with the belief that men would be better in terms of physicality and “motor nerve.” She shared that she had a hard time with *jaban dwijipgi*:

In the camp workshop, seven people, a mixed gender group, including me, learned *jaban dwijipgi* and I did the best job among them. I might have been doing well, if I have continued practicing it. Since I belong to a female group, however, I hardly practice it... Later, in 2005 when I was 30 years old, I had to play the role of *beoggu* player with four men at a particular drumming performance. During the one-hour performance, I couldn't perform *jaban dwijipgi* at the same speed as the men. I lost my confidence when I saw the men doing well, even if they were in their twenties, and I realized that I could not do as well as them. (Jeong Wonyeong 11/11/11)

Due to this experience, she believed strongly that women would be inferior to men in terms of physicality. Along the same lines, Lee Chohye, a *yeonhui* major specializing in *sogo* at Hanyejong, also found that men were generally “faster in using their bodies”:

There were younger male members in our team. We learned the same thing at the same time and practiced for the same amount of time, but they were faster in performing it. Since I was older than them, I must have practiced more than them. However, they were faster to digest it. I wondered why? I found they were faster because they are men. I didn't feel good about it. Since Jinju-Samcheonpo *nongak* [that I play] originated from a military background, it is difficult even for men. But, I don't feel difficult in terms of physical strength, because I have been doing this since I was little. Probably I got used to it. (Lee Chohye 11/9/11)

She practiced hard, to the extent that teachers called her a “workaholic” because she did not want to hear teachers commenting that “it is natural that women can't perform *jaban* well.” She often heard, “Women play *sogo*?,” which she interpreted as questioning the quality of women's performance, rather than curiosity regarding how well women can do a hard task. Recently, she learned a different *beoggu nori* repertoire from three regional *pungmul*. Since she was used to the “rolling” style of *jaban dwijipgi* from Jinju-Samcheonpo *nongak*, she had a hard time learning the “jumping” style from other *pungmul*:

There were two men who did not specialize in *sogo*, but performed *sogo* in the presentation. If there had been enough *sogo* players, the teacher might not have included me. I thought I should do it, because I saw those two non-*sogo* majors perform. As a result of working on it, I was able to perform it. (Lee Chohye 11/9/11)

The examples of Jeong Wonyeong and Lee Chohye show that gender mattered when they were competing with men in *jaban dwijipgi* performance. Even though they already challenged the maleness of being drummers and *sogo* players, they still felt the gender difference in terms of physicality when performing with—and thus comparing themselves to—male performers.

Unlike these drummers, some women drummers did not believe that gender would be relevant to their physicality or physical strength. Kim So Ra, a *janggu* player and the leader of



the women's *yeonhui* group Noriggot, admitted that "men are superior to women in terms of physicality," but, at the same time, thought that gender might not matter in their performance as long as they began learning before puberty. After observing the performance of senior women drummers involved in *yeoseong nongakdan*, she commented:

According to Yoo Jihwa *seonsaengnim*, it makes no sense that women can't perform [*jaban dwijipgi*] well because they are women and thus have a different physical structure...When [Yoo Jihwa] was in *yeoseong nongakdan*, women couldn't help playing all instruments. They practiced in the field, even when it snowed, to the extent they could perform as well as men. When I was in college, some of the *yeoseong nongakdan* members reunited and performed in the theater. Even though they didn't perform any more and lived as housewives, they had what they used to do when they were young embedded in their bodies. So, I found they hardly had any problem in performing even though they were in their fifties. Of course, they couldn't jump as much as when they were young. (Kim So Ra 11/9/11)

She thought that "if one starts when one is young, one's gender is not a big deal. Men and women, before they reach the age of puberty, can absorb the same thing. So, those individuals can survive long as performers; they seem to have no problem returning after childbirth."

However, she thought that this would not be the case for those who started drumming later in their lives.

Jung Hyun Ah, predominantly a *janggu* player, and Moon Injae, specializing in *soe* at Hanyejong, denied that there was a difference in physical strength between men and women; both asserted that they never felt that the physical demands were too difficult:

When I was in college, there were two women and five men among the drumming majors. There were some conflicts caused by the difference in physical strength. Physicality depends on how you have practiced...I had good physical strength since I was young, to the extent that men acknowledged it. I have not experienced or believed that there is a difference in physical strength between men and women, not when I was in college, and not when I worked with a men's team after I graduated...[But] I've observed more women who are weaker in physical strength. (Jung Hyun Ah 11/6/11)

I used to work with four men of my age in Jeongeup *nongak*. I didn't want to feel that I cannot do well, physically, because of pride. I don't feel that it is physically hard for me. I always thought I could do better than them, regardless of being a woman. I thought I

was better than them in terms of physical strength. I did the same thing as men did.  
(Moon Injae 11/9/11)

Although neither Jeong Hyuna nor Moon Injae experienced deficiencies in physical strength compared to men, their accounts imply that they were still conscious that physical strength would be an important factor for the drummers.

Some other drummers weighed other elements over physicality. Yoo Jihwa (8/18/10), a senior women drummer who led a *yeoseong nongakdan* in the past and leads a Jeongeup *nongak* now, shared her perspective on drumming: “You should not perform with physical strength, but with enjoyment and artistry. When you perform, imagine you have air in your body... You shouldn’t have tension (‘*him*’), but pretend as if you don’t have a bone in your body.” From her point of view, playing *jangu* and *soe* seemed to be more difficult than playing *buk* or *sogo*, which implies that she valued *jangu* and *soe* performances that would require “sophisticated” techniques. Kang Seokhyeong (8/11/10), who recently graduated from Hanyejong as a *yeonhui* major and joined the Hanullim group, believed that women in this field would be physically competent and thus that “technique matters more.” Considering physicality as a given, he emphasized that technique allowed a performer to compete. He noted, “I wouldn’t say that there is a difference between men’s and women’s performance, but there is a difference of ‘taste’ (*mat*) and ‘style’ (*meot*), when men perform and when women perform.” Yoo Jihwa and Kang Seokhyeong seemed to value the technique of drumming, whether they took gender and physicality into consideration or not.

Park Eunha maintained her career despite having surgery for cancer in 1989; she emphasized the importance of mental strength over physicality:

I feel a lack of physical strength, particularly after experiencing menopause, but I didn’t talk about it. How shall I stop the passing of age? Even if I feel less strong in terms of physicality, I feel stronger in terms of mentality. So, I wouldn’t say that I feel less power,

because I become powerful if I concentrate on it. That is “*gi*” and mental strength. Even though the sound may not be that loud, I believe that the sound naturally—not forcefully—coming from me will reach the heart of audience members. I perform on stage with supernatural power. (Park Eunha 6/21/11)

In addition to her mental strength, she believed that “using her body” through dance made her healthier than male drummers of her age who often suffered from occupational illness, partly because they “used their body too much” when they were young (6/21/11). Given the examples of Park Eunha and Lee Sera, both in their fifties, drummers who have also worked as dancers tended to feel more confident with using their bodies. Observing senior drummers who “still perform with their mental strength,” Jung Hyun Ah believed that the “difference in drumming sound” could derive from *gongnyeok* (the energy that emerges after a long period of training) rather than physical strength:

There is a gap among performers, because of the ways in which they effectively interpret and perform music. It has nothing to do with physical strength and with gender...I think the mental strength is more important, if one has practiced hard. I’ve seen elderly performers who were only able to stand on the stage with the help of others but performed for a long time. (Jung Hyun Ah 11/6/11)

Kim Gyuhyeong, a male drummer, did not agree that drumming would be performed through physical strength, saying that “If you considered that one can play drums only with physical strength, it would be Korean wrestlers or weightlifters who played drums the best.”

It is usually said that men are better in terms of muscular power. But drum performance depends on the energy one uses, rather than physical strength. If men play with physical strength, without energy, then it sounds noisy. I can see it. When one plays a drum, it requires energy. So, I think it would be more wonderful if the woman who has weaker muscular energy performs that energy well. So, it depends on how one performs one’s energy, rather than the gender. (Kim Gyuhyeong 10/17/11)

From the perspective that “energy” would be the most important element in drumming, he spoke highly of Park Eunha, noting, “Her energy is 100 times better than the standard male performers. Her muscular energy may not be as good as men, but the way she deals with instruments is not

reachable.” He believed that Park Eunha must have worked hard to make that kind of sound, not by building up muscles. Furthermore, he pointed out that the younger generation of drummers, whether men or women, tended to be more concerned with their “physical power” in drumming: “Men tend to play with physical strength while women who are obsessed with the conception that they are less powerful don’t actually perform physical strength and would say ‘I don’t have power’” (10/17/11).

Along the same lines, Kim Duk Soo stated, “we perform music, through which we express the aesthetic of what our soul is enriched with, with the excitement (*sinmyeong*) that our rhythmic patterns (*jangdan*) provoke” (8/13/11). He believes that since drumming is an art work, young performers, even if they tend to have better physicality, cannot perform better than older people who have *gongnyeok* that they have gained over the years (Kim Duk Soo 2007). He also believes that the aesthetic of Korean rhythms lies in the way they are “enveloped in a circle” by *gongnyeok*; he asserts that this aesthetic can be presented by aged performers, who, with the wisdom of long life, can better express their deep emotions and sentiments (ibid.). What Kim Duk Soo and Jung Hyun Ah mean by “*gongnyeok*” and what Kim Gyuhyeong means by “energy” seem to refer to the same principle: something that could be earned through much practice and time and would help in performing effectively and “deliciously.”

In all of this discussion, two main views of physicality in drumming seem to emerge. One group of drummers highlights physicality, considering it as the basis of drum performance. They may associate it with “masculinity” in the belief that gender is important to physicality or they may assert that gender is irrelevant. The other group of drummers values qualities such as mental strength, “energy,” technique, and artistry in playing drums above physicality. These drummers, generally experienced seniors, have theories of drumming that go beyond physicality,

although not necessarily ignoring it. The younger drummers, especially those who challenge the most “masculine” role in drumming—for example, *beoggu* players—tend to be more conscious of physical gender differences.

### **The “Masculinization” of Women Drummers**

Korean drumming continued to be “masculinized” over the second half of the twentieth century due to the enormous growth of military culture—based on military regimes and compulsory military service—influencing Korean daily practices (Kwon Insook 2005; Jeong Heejin 2011). For example, the democratization movement in the 1980s was led by predominantly male college students, and featured aggressive demonstrations and the “masculinization” of women activists within that community (Kwon Insook 2005: 128).

This military culture pervaded musical life, and was especially obvious in male-centric educational programs for voice, winds, and percussion instruments. According to Nah YoonKyeong (2007), the vocal programs in co-ed colleges maintain and reproduce military culture; male students who come from military service have internalized its culture, and bring their attitudes into the program, while the program itself is characterized by communal activities, disciplining the body, and normalizing violence as a sign of affection. Likewise, the assumption and expectation that women drummers must become “masculinized” to adjust to the “masculine” drumming culture are normalized. There are different ways in which drummers conceptualize women’s “being masculinized” in the drumming field. Some expect women drummers to do the same activities as men regarding performance and exercise, including carrying baggage and instruments. Others perceive it in the way women drummers are less concerned about appearing “feminine,” especially in their physical presentation. Some locate “masculinization” in the way

women drummers present actions and attitudes typically associated with men, doing things women are not supposed and expected to do and be.

Yoo Sojeong (b. 1976) joined the *samulnori* group Hanullim, led by Kim Duk Soo, in the mid-1990s when she was 21 years old, part of the last generation of the apprentice system within the group; she also worked for the female *samulnori* group Assim, one of the subgroups of Hanullim, supervised by Kim Duk Soo. She believed that “*samulnori* is masculine and should be played by men” from the perspective of physicality (refer to her experience regarding physicality on P. 74). She also saw the “masculine” characteristics of *samulnori*—“powerful” and “straight” (lit. “linear”; likely implying “straightforward”)—reflected in the character of the performers and the group:

[Kim Duk Soo] is determined, firm, and his energy is explosive. As opposed to the “soft” energy expressed by female dancers, his energy is powerful and straight. He is always passionate with everything, e.g. when teaching, talking, performing, even eating. (Yoo Sojeong 9/6/11)

According to her, Kim Duk Soo has a strong and “masculine” quality, not only in his performance but also in his personality and behavior. She remembered that the Hanullim she belonged to was otherwise a “completely male group”:

[Hanullim members] were very closed and conservative socially, in contrast to the “new” music that they did. Their pride was very high since the group sold well... They were not friendly to new or young members. It was not necessarily toward [female members] but to all... As juniors in the group, we had to do all kinds of chores and errands, including carrying Kim Duk Soo’s luggage. Women were not taken into consideration as women in that group. (Yoo Sojeong 9/6/11)

Given her description, Hanullim was typical of male-dominant groups at the time, emphasizing a hierarchical order between seniors and juniors. While Yoo Sojeong experienced a completely “masculine” culture in the drumming field and defined it as such, the next generation of drummers often described the people or atmosphere of the drumming field as “*giga seda*” (lit.

“energy is strong”; more accurately, “vitality is strong”) or “*gungiga ganghada*” (lit. “military energy is strong”; more accurately, “military discipline is strong”), implying but not stating “masculinity.”

Lee Hana, who graduated from college in 2012, also described the atmosphere of her *taak* major as “*giga seda*”:

When I entered the school, there were quite a few senior members who had just returned from military service, and thus *gungi* [military discipline] was dominant among drumming-major students. Since I experienced it when I was in high school, I was okay with it. However, I couldn’t stand with the senior members’ decisions of what to play based on gender, putting women after men... When I became a senior member, I was in control of junior members. I did assign instruments according to their ability, not by gender. Even though there were a couple of male seniors who transferred from another school, they didn’t have that kind of military discipline, so I had a great time since I was third year at my college. (Lee Hana 4/26/12)

When she was a junior student in college, she felt pressured not only because of military discipline, but also due to general unfairness on the part of male senior members. Nevertheless, her account underlines her exposure to the strong hierarchical order influenced by military culture when she was in high school and college.

Gong Bitna, who graduated in 2008, did not experience that kind of male-centered culture when she was in college, even though there were more men in her major. She recalled that there were seniors who were much older (about ten years) than her, and they were generally nice to her and she did not have any trouble with them. However, she had a hard time when she worked for a mixed-gender drumming group whose members, both men and women, were “strong” in terms of performance and personality:

It was hard for me when we were divided into separate teams within the group and had to compete with other teams in order to be chosen for the international tour. The senior members trained me in an authoritarian manner and I underwent severe training [unlike what I experienced before]. (Gong Bitna 4/26/12)

She left the group after six months, partly because she could not stand the “domineering attitude” of a couple of senior members. Lee Hana and Gong Bitna thus still experienced the hierarchical and domineering atmosphere based on military culture, even if at a lesser intensity.

The male-dominated, male-centric culture as illustrated above led to the emergence among *pungmul* performers of “masculinized women” who “internalized masculine culture and authoritarian style” (Hong Seongmin 8/7/10). According to what senior members told Kang Seonil, the male drummer of Gongmyoung, female senior members were considered much “scarier” than male seniors, as reflected in the expressions “*gissen yeoja*” (lit. women who have strong energy) and “scary women” (7/15/11). This perception is the likely factor behind the master of ceremonies’ conception of women drummers in the anecdote at the beginning of this chapter. Kang Seonil also shared his perspective on some female senior drummers who led *yeoseong nongakdan*:

Their behaviors are women’s but their characters are men’s. They say swear words, urge, and say that you are doing well or not, because they are honest about expressing their thoughts and emotions. They like dressing up or making themselves up, but the way they speak in a direct manner is like men. I think they can’t help but to do things that way because they had to lead a big group. (Kang Seonil 7/26/11)

Kang Seonil’s description of women drummers may give a picture of “masculinized women” among the older generation of women in the drumming field. The younger generation of drummers often observed that some senior women drummers had gained a strong character like men by “killing their femininity,” whereas some drummers who also worked as dancers had developed their “femininity” to appeal to audiences in that role (Yoo Sojeong 11/01/11).

Hong Seongmin, who participated in the democratization movement in the 1980s when she was a college student and has been involved in *pungmul* groups since the late 1980s, shared her thoughts on “being female” at the time:



When I was young, I never thought or requested that my being a woman should be taken into consideration by itself. Women themselves did not admit their “femininity.” But, these days, the atmosphere of organization culture has changed to respect diversity... (Hong Seongmin 8/7/11)

What she conceptualized at the time represents a normalization of the “masculinization” observed among women activists involved in the democratization movement in the 1980s (Kwon Insook 2005). The attitude of concern for the collective—the nation as a whole—over individual problems was as typical of the democratization movement as it was for the military life. In this case, the way in which women dismissed their individual concern—being “feminine”—for the purpose of attaining the collective’s goal—the democratization of Korea—influenced their attitude in other areas as well.

In addition to female college students involved in *pungmul* groups in the 1980s, women involved in male-dominant drumming troupes in the 1980s-1990s seemed to go through “masculinization.” Jeong Wonyeong confessed that she acted like a man when she was involved in *namsadang*, although she was more a “woman” on stage. When she was young, even though she heard “women should have a good visual and be feminine,” she did not concentrate on it like other women drummers (11/11/11). Pyo Seonu, in the same generation as Jeong Wonyeong, was involved in the Anseong *namsadang* troupe; she too said that “we were likely to become masculinized since women get adjusted to men’s culture”:

There women-like women hardly exist. We are never coy and we don’t pretend to be weak...At the same time, I’ve never seen other female members expressing their difficulties as women. (Pyo Seonu 7/19/08)

Furthermore, she pointed out that “*gi*” predominantly “controlled people, whether they are men or women.” From the experiences of Jeong Wonyeong and Pyo Seonu (both in their mid-thirties), the women drummers involved in male-dominated drumming groups in the 1980s-1990s could be described as “boyish” women, not only in appearance but also in behavior,

although it seemed that women were expected to wear make-up when performing. Such “masculinization” in the drumming field was thus normalized even when “feminine” appearance was required in performance.

As women have gotten more involved in drumming in recent decades, women drummers do not seem to have gone through “masculinization” as much as before. Lee Hana and Gong Bitna (4/26/12), both *taak* majors who grew up with drumming after the 1990s, informed me that there were no “boyish”<sup>65</sup> women drummers among their classmates; they all tended to pay attention to their “appearance” like other women. This might reflect a culture in which appearance has become a major concern for Koreans; since the 1990s, plastic surgery, diet, and the health and fitness industries have exploited those interests for profit (Han Okseon 2007). The mass media further stimulates women’s desire to be pretty and beautiful and the necessity of being so, while the internet makes it easier to learn about and discuss those concerns (ibid.).

However, “masculinization” to some degree still seemed to be present among *yeonhui* major students and regional *pungmul* groups. Im Irang, a *yeonhui* major who graduated in 2009, shared with me that she used to “act like a man” in college (11//9/11). Lee Chohye, a *yeonhui* major as of 2011, informed me of the conception that “women doing *yeonhui* are physically strong and not considered ‘women’”—and the less negative “women who play *pungmul* are not different from men.” Therefore, according to her, it seemed to be normalized that “women become stronger and men treat women platonically.” Lee Chohye added that “we have a strong sense of comradeship”:

We always hang out together, especially because drumming can be performed by at least four people. We emphasize a family-like atmosphere and thus there is no difference between men and women. (Lee Chohye 11/9/11)

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<sup>65</sup> This is a common descriptor in Korean culture, not to be confused with “manly” or “butch.”

Kim So Ra also found that *pungmul* performers tended to have a strong sense of “collectivity,” collaboration, and consideration, because they never perform alone.<sup>66</sup> She continued that “we tend to consider less the other sex as “woman” or “man”; if we do, it will be hard to perform together” (11/9/11). Yet she also said that women who have performed *yeonhui* or *pungmul* have become more “androgynous,” meaning non-feminine, or moving toward the male “normal”—in which case their “femininity” was suppressed, rather than both “femininity” and “masculinity” being accepted. In this respect, Kim So Ra noted that “we can survive only when we become ‘masculinized’ in every aspect,” since Korean percussion instruments are “masculine” and “tough”:

Men and women both carry instruments... We never say “Could you carry this for me?,” “Could you perform slowly?” and “I don’t feel well or I’ve got my period.” If we do say these things, then we can’t perform with them. It is like that because *yeonhui* has a strong sense of collectivity. If women think that way, we will be the weaker person, protected by men. (Kim So Ra 11/9/11)

It seems that what she meant by being “masculinized” is that women do the same things men do—but with the important consideration that maleness is the default, normalized role.

Lee Seongjae (11/3/11), a male drummer of the *yeonhui* group U-Hee, had a slightly different opinion. Even though he agreed that the *yeonhui* major has been “masculine” and controlled by *gungi*, he shared with me that female *yeonhui* performers would be expected to follow a traditional gender role. According to him, there was a saying among *gugak* musicians that “one should marry a *yeonhui*-major woman”; they could be raised as a “supportive wife” partly because they have been taught by male teachers:

It seems to have changed these days, but when I was in Gugak National High School, there was a “tradition” that female students would come to a practice room early in the

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<sup>66</sup> This parallels to the case of vocal programs that Nah Yoongyeong (2007) studies: Since all the students require collaborating for opera, for example, they are likely to become “militarized,” forbidding romantic relationships between men and women.

morning and clean it, which is ordered by female seniors. There were different roles between men and women; men take charge of carrying loads when attending competitions. Usually, arts-specializing high school has *gungi* among men or women. When male seniors pass by, male juniors should bow to them at a 90 degree angle; this applies among women. However, *gungi* is less notable between men and women... (Lee Seongjae 11/3/11)

He also shared with me that this kind of military discipline was still effective in Hanyejong, where he studied *yeonhui*; juniors were supposed to clean a practice room in the morning, but male students, including him, usually did not do so. He saw that everyone seemed to clean it together these days, but still there was a conceptional division that cleaning would be more a women's role. Lee Chohye noted that men tended to carry the heaviest luggage, while women tended to do "what is feminine," although women would never avoid the work-load as far as practice is concerned. Nevertheless, women were assigned to play "*mudong*" unless they could play *janggu* or other instruments very well in the performance context; men did not play this role.

The "masculinization" among women drummers illustrates a normalization of women adjusting to the culture of male-centered organizations. The male-centric culture of the current drumming field is based on a military culture whose own "masculinity" is continually reinforced. Yet while military culture was influential throughout the 1980s-1990s, the succeeding generation is more influenced by a transformed social environment that encourages women to pursue "beauty" and "femininity." Throughout, it seems that women have the dual burdens of being "masculinized" to an extent simply by being in a traditionally male field, and at the same time expected to perform womanhood.

### ***Samulnori*: the Manifestation of “Masculinization”**

The previous section established the male-dominant and male-centric character of drumming culture, much of which is reinforced by a hierarchical organization based on military discipline. *Samulnori* is a specific manifestation of the “masculinization” of Korean drumming; this section situates this “masculinization” within its contemporary aesthetic and sociopolitical environment. The version of *samulnori* that was first performed in 1978 and grew in popularity in the 1980s was perhaps especially subject to such “masculinization,” due to an emphasis on “power” and “speed,” reflecting the era’s violent sociopolitical atmosphere and increasing national demand for international influence. The “masculinized” practice of *samulnori* corresponded to the aesthetics of contemporary audiences; in turn, it is currently propagated by the younger generation of drummers that it influenced.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the young male drummers who founded *samulnori* were concerned with the “disappearance” of traditional performing arts and intended to create “new” music that could be appreciated by contemporary audiences (Kim Duk Soo 2007). Even though the “new” form of *samulnori* was criticized as betraying “tradition,” it appealed to younger generations both inside and outside of Korea. As it became popular, it came to be taught to people from non-musical and non-academic backgrounds in a variety of “untraditional” spaces. Ultimately, the Korean government decided to promote *samulnori* as a “traditional music” representative of Korean music in general.

The military regimes of the 1960s-1980s used “discipline and coercion” to build a nation based on anti-Communism, industrialization, and modernization, all tied up in compulsory military service (Moon Seungsook 2005). The 1980s were particularly violent, as political activists in the democratization movement, predominantly college students, engaged in highly

combative protests ruthlessly suppressed by the military forces. In addition to firebombing protesters, the Chun Doo Hwan military regime (1980-1988) attempted to stamp out the growth of the democratization movement by promoting the 3S (“screen,” “sex,” and “sports”) policy, with the intent of distracting the public from sociopolitical issues. The entertainment, sports, and sex industries flourished, with color televisions found in most houses, both nightlife and sex traffic ballooning with the abolition of a curfew, and professional sports leagues in baseball, basketball, soccer, and Korean wrestling launched.<sup>67</sup>

While the government sought to use attention-grabbing international events such as the 1986 Asian Olympics and 1988 Seoul Olympics to further stabilize public sentiment,<sup>68</sup> hosting the Olympics was also crucial for Korea promoting itself on the world stage. Korean drumming contributed to the “powerful” image of Korea presented at those events. For example, the opening ceremony of the 1988 Seoul Olympics featured many kinds of Korean drums; the playing of the *yonggo* (lit. dragon drum; the biggest drum in Korean music) in Figure III-5 is one of the most iconic scenes of the ceremony. *Samulnori* played a significant role in representing Korean traditional performing arts during these events; for instance, Kim Duk Soo’s *samulnori* group toured many countries while accompanying Korean Olympic representatives for the lighting of the Olympic torch.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> The three related concepts of “sake,” “speed,” and “service” also intended to turn the focus towards non-disruptive social engagement. “Sake” in this context means “egoism”; “speed” means “speedily developing technique and changing culture”; and “service” is related to the nightlife industry (“3S jeongchaek” [3S policies], in *Wikibaekgwa* [wiki encyclopedia], available <http://ko.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?oldid=11713587>, accessed on January 28, 2014.)

<sup>68</sup> “Seupocheuro jibaehara: 5 gong 3S jeongchaek [Govern with Sports: 3S Policies by the Fifth Regime], a series of MBC TV program *Ijeneun malhalsu itda* [Now We can Tell], first aired May 22, 2005, available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sTSdliu\\_hyQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sTSdliu_hyQ), accessed on January 28, 2014.

<sup>69</sup> The promotional material of Nanjang Cultures Inc., available at [http://203.252.231.26/kukak\\_information/samulnori/nanjang-samulnori.pdf](http://203.252.231.26/kukak_information/samulnori/nanjang-samulnori.pdf), accessed on June 5, 2014. This exposure led to the group touring the U.S. for a month, following the Olympics. The group had made its New York



**Figure III-5:** *Yonggo* performed at the 1988 Seoul Olympics’ opening ceremony  
© Bloomberg

The government’s emphasis on “power” and “speed” in promoting the national image matched much of the “new” style of *samulnori*. Kim Ju Hong asserted that *samulnori*, whose “keyword is speed and power,” was involved in creating a “powerful” image of Korea. The association of such qualities with “masculinity” therefore implicitly reinforced the “masculinization” of Korean drumming.

Kim Ju Hong pointed out, however, that the “feminine”—“soft and tender”—qualities of drumming were also veiled by the process of simplifying drumming for mass education:

The *pungmul* style from Jeolla [southwestern] province is soft, easy and supple. For example, it adds “dda [a stroke by thin bamboo stick]” before playing “gung [a stroke by

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City debut in 1983 in a tour organized by the Asia Society, whose director Beate Gordon saw *samulnori* as a “global art that carries powerful acoustics” (Im Yeoncheol. “Gimdeoksuae chocheonghan mi asia hyeop godeon ‘gangryeolhan eumhyangeui hanguk samulnorineun segyejeok yesul’” [Gordon, the director of the Asia Society of the U.S. who invited Kim Duk Soo’s troupe, said “Korean *samulnori* characterized by powerful acoustics is a world art”], *Donga Ilbo* (July 14, 1988), available at <http://newslibrary.naver.com/viewer/index.nhn?articleId=1988071400209214012&editNo=2&printCount=1&publihDate=1988-07-14&officeId=00020&pageNo=14&printNo=20547&publishType=00020>, accessed on January 29, 2014.

stick with mallet],” as if “gung” embraces “dda.” This “gideong” sound became “gung” to make it easier to disseminate. (Kim Ju Hong 5/27/11)

In this way, the rhythmic patterns of drumming were simplified to allow for amateur access once drumming was popularized and widely taught as a “traditional music.” This simplifying process for mass education represents a different level of “masculinization” of drumming.

Kim So Ra (11/9/11) asserted that the primary character of drumming was “more masculine than feminine”; it seemed to her that *samulnori* has been further “masculinized” in that it presents the maximum of “power,” “speed,” and “dynamics.” She believed that *samulnori* “tastes like *samulnori* only when performed with the power of men.” She continued, “If feminine characters are expressed in *samulnori*, you can’t feel the essence of *samulnori*,” and “Women should play like men, otherwise they will be considered incapable.” Park Kyung Jin’s experience supports this conclusion: When she played *jing* and *jjaksoe* (duet *soe*) for a *samulnori* piece with three other men at college, she was complimented, yet later she found out that people commented that “*samulnori* should have been played by four men; it has a different taste” (7/26/11). She might not have presented the “masculinity” that *samulnori* players are expected to; although she practiced much harder than the men, she was excluded from the next *samulnori* performance. This demonstrates that it is normalized that women are expected to become “masculinized” for performance to “taste” like *samulnori*; otherwise, they seem likely to be excluded from playing altogether.

The “masculine” elements of *samulnori* are often discussed by scholars as a defining aspect of the genre. Hesselink, an American ethnomusicologist specializing in drumming, observes that *samulnori*’s “energy, speed, and even sex appeal” were the main factors that appeal to younger audiences:



Its energy, speed, and even sex appeal seemed to have matched the vigor of younger audiences and popular music being heard in the media, so that SamulNori audiences were able to forge an identity that acknowledged folk roots while maintaining a kind of urban, modern savvy. (Hesselink 2012: 2)

Regarding his conception of “sex appeal,” Hesselink (11/16/13) explained to me that the performers he saw in *samulnori* in the mid-1980s were all “young men” in their late 20s, except for Park Eunha, and they had “huge female fans.” Then he pointed out that *samulnori*, a “masculine art that comes out of *namsadang* tradition,” presents a strength of playing that “masculinizes” its practice; he found “masculine” elements in *samulnori*’s “emphasis on loudness, speed, and virtuosity.” Along the same lines, Lee So-young, a Korean music scholar, believes that *samulnori* is optimized to appeal to contemporary audiences with Western modern aesthetics as well as the musical aesthetics of traditional rhythms and the acoustic character of drumming:

In the case of samdo *seoljanggu*, speeding up from a slow to fast tempo, followed by the climax at *huimori*, would be an efficient way for consistently increasing the musical effect toward the end. Drumming in a sitting position at *samulnori* performance is intended to create an explosive and dramatic climax by concentrating on the instruments and restraining oneself, as opposed to diffusing the energy with bodily movements when drumming in a standing position. This makes the audience crazy with the intended climax, compared to the playful excitement that traditional drumming gives rise to. (Lee So-young 1999: 243)

She interprets *samulnori*’s virtuosic performance, its “explosive and dramatic climax,” (ibid.: 243) and “a sense of limitless speed and infinitely developed sensual stimulation” (ibid.: 248) as a “modern” aesthetic. Furthermore, she compares the aesthetic effect and performance environment of *samulnori* to the “strong power based on speedy guitar playing and electronic acoustics,” “virtuosic and phallocentric performance scene,” and “corresponding collective enthusiasm” seen at rock performances (ibid.: 249). Her interpretation of *samulnori* as having a modern aesthetic and her comparison of it with rock performances suggests an association of

*samulnori* with “masculinity.” From that perspective, Hesselink and Lee So-young seem to share the view that *samulnori* was developed to be “masculine” in order to satisfy contemporary audiences’ demand.



Figure III-6: *Samulnori* performance by Taedong

These “masculine” elements of *samulnori* corresponded to the aesthetic of contemporary audiences. It is commonly observed that contemporary audiences at drumming performances applaud more passionately when the drummers play faster rhythmic patterns, as if playing speedily demonstrates their skill. Indeed, the reviews by those who have watched *samulnori* performances often mention a fascination with how *janggu* players play both skins alternately in such a speedy tempo that their arm movements are a blur (see Figure III-6). However, the *samulnori* sound is sometimes negatively perceived; a male Korean friend of mine, who is not a music major but has a wide range of musical tastes, experienced *samulnori* performance in the 1990s when he was in his twenties and found that “it did not sound like music, but rather gunshots.” He confessed that he could not stand the “aggressive” sound of *samulnori* in the

concert, although he mentioned that it might have been because of the small concert hall that did not seem to effectively deliver the loud sound in terms of acoustics. This kind of negative perspective was also found among drummers in the *gugak* field, especially senior ones, as younger drummers have increasingly concentrated on power and speed in their *samulnori* performance:

There is no depth, space, and inspiration in *samulnori*; it is just fast and quick like a machine. (A)  
It became speedy and sport-like rather than music. (B)

Drummer B observed that “there was the synergy effect when the talented master drummers such as Kim Duk Soo and Lee Kwang-Soo played fast, but these days young people seem to have only technique, paying attention to playing fast.” Drummer C, who is of a younger generation, had a similar perspective of how the way of playing *samulnori* has changed since the first generation of *samulnori* drummers:

I do not believe that the earliest style of *samulnori* focused on power and speed as much as the contemporary style; instead, the emphasis on them might have been mistakenly adopted by followers and become the standard. (C)

As discussed in the section on physicality, this may show a tendency among the younger generation of drummers to be more concerned with their physicality, whereas seniors tend to value other elements beyond physicality. Furthermore, this may suggest that drumming performances that emphasize speed are normalized in the contemporary music scene. This is not limited to drumming genres and music in Korea. Bin Sunae, a female shaman of eastern shaman rituals, also mentioned that “both singing and instrumental accompaniment became faster” compared to her mother’s generation, to satisfy contemporary audiences who get bored with slow music (8/26/11). Yu Kyung-Hwa, who recently spent time in India learning the Indian *tala*

system and collaborating with an Indian master drummer, observed that drummers in India tended to play too fast:

When I went to India, a drummer played music too fast and complicatedly to the extent that it made me almost throw up. When I asked why there is no beauty of space, I was told that the masters played one note/stroke with a full sound, representing a certain aesthetic in the past, but it becomes speedy as the age changes...( Yu Kyung-Hwa 9/2/11)

She saw that “speed” seemed to be a parameter that would represent the musical style of the age.

As opposed to approaches to *samulnori* that see it as “masculinized,” whether because of sociopolitical context, national image, or audience demand, there are different approaches to *samulnori* that assess the genre as “feminized.” Nam Gimun, a member of a government-affiliated *samulnori* group who was born into a *namsadang* family, asserted that *samulnori* drumming has been “feminized” in that it has become more “sophisticated” in terms of drumming technique:

Because indoor performance cannot deliver the same excitement and appreciation as outdoor performance, *samulnori* had to add ornamenting rhythms and thus become more feminine... (Nam Gimun 6/21/11)

He seemed to interpret “ornamenting” rhythms and “sophisticated” as “feminine.” Kim So Ra had a different view. Just as she differentiated performing “in a masculine way” in *samulnori* from playing “strongly” in *pungmul*, she asserted that playing “in a feminine way” and “softly” would be different from each other:

Strong playing of the drums in *pungmul* is necessary to build up power, which is for base but not for masculinity. Likewise, playing softly is not necessarily for femininity. Percussion basically needs to be played strongly and wildly; one can express femininity once the strength and wildness is obtained...Along the same lines, *samulnori* requires playing some sophisticated rhythmic patterns, which cannot be considered feminine. (Kim So Ra 11/9/11)

She did not equate sophisticated rhythms with “femininity.” Interestingly, Cho Jin-Young thought that *samulnori* made it easier for women to be involved in drumming; *samulnori*,

especially the repertoire performed in a sitting position on an indoor stage, removed the restrictions for women related to such difficult techniques as *jaban dwijipgi*:

Women were hardly involved in *pungmul*. Women were not able to perform *jaban dwijipgi* and could not play the role of *sangsoe* until recently. Even now, *sangsoe* is taken by men in *nongak* groups, except for a couple of female *sangsoe* who show excellent talent in Honam udo *nongak*. Women are barely involved in *jaban dwijipgi* and playing *yeoldubal sangmo* [*sangmo* with an 18-meter-long ribbon]. I believe that the transformation of outdoor *pungmul* performance into *samulnori* stage performance expanded the realm where women can participate. (Cho Jin-Young 8/12/10)

Therefore, from the perspective of assessing *samulnori* as having removed gender barriers, Yu Kyung-Hwa (9/2/11) did not consider it necessarily “masculinized.”

Whether or not *samulnori* should be interpreted as “masculine,” and regardless of the intentions of the first generation of *samulnori* performers, performing *samulnori* with an emphasis on “power” and “speed” has become normalized, reinforcing the presentation of a “powerful” Korean image and appealing to contemporary audiences.

## Conclusion

Gender concepts, such as what is “feminine,” what is “masculine,” and their dichotomy, are not only embedded in the discourse of Korean drumming, but also reinforced through performances by drummers who have internalized them. The concept of what is “masculine” in drumming that is discussed in this chapter—focusing on *pungmul* and *samulnori*—is threefold. First, percussion instruments in general seem to be perceived as associated with “*yang*” and thus “strength,” both invoking and reinforcing a supposition that the difficulty is too high for women to play drums. Second, “masculine” qualities are often related specifically to *buk* performance and the acrobatic movement *jaban dwijipgi*, which are again believed to require implicitly “masculine” physicality and muscular power. Third, *samulnori* is “masculinized” in the

emphasis on performing with “power” and “speed,” which contributes to the construction of a powerful Korean image. In addition to these “masculine” interpretations of components of drumming, the drumming field, as a male-dominant organization, is highly influenced by military culture and thus characterized by the hierarchical order and male-centeredness of military discipline. This naturalization of “masculine” qualities and male-centric culture is part of a structure seemingly created to both define and reinforce what it is to be a “Korean man.” Thus women engaging with the practice see themselves as having negotiate the space by creating their own sense of identity fundamentally in opposition to, but also engaging with, the “masculinity” of that practice.

## Chapter IV. Contemporary Drumming Groups: Surveys and Strategies

In the 1980s the first generation of *samulnori* players achieved success in the domestic and international markets. Many professional and amateur *samulnori* groups formed soon afterwards, performing a standardized *samulnori* repertoire consisting of what the first-generation performers rearranged and “created” based on rhythmic patterns from *pungmul*. However, new drumming groups emerging in the 1990s resisted this standardized “*samulnori*” practice, experimenting with traditional rhythmic patterns and incorporating drumming components from other cultures. These performers were the first-generation of *gugak* musicians who not only studied *gugak* in high schools and colleges but were also familiar with the Western music curriculum; they were involved in *changjak gugak*, new compositions based on *gugak* that emphasize creativity and experimentation (Lee So-young 2003; Sutton 2003). As “fusion” *gugak* ensembles, which synthesize *gugak* and non-Korean music styles, began to gain popularity in the late 1990s, drumming groups proactively incorporated various drumming styles from other cultures.<sup>70</sup> Nowadays, it is trendy for drumming groups to play *modeumbuk* (a modified drum-set made up of different-sized barrel drums), influenced by Japanese *taiko*, and to emphasize “performance” aspects.<sup>71</sup>

Women not only joined the wave of drumming groups formed after the success of *samulnori*, but also formed all-women’s drumming groups. However, few of these women

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<sup>70</sup> *Changjak gugak* is characterized by its “seriousness” and “artistic profundity,” while fusion *gugak* intends to popularize the genre with its “accessibility” and “enjoyability” (Sutton 2003). For example, Seulgidung, a first-generation fusion *gugak* ensemble, popularized a genre of *gugak* utilizing electronic instruments such as keyboard and guitar (Lee So-young 2003).

<sup>71</sup> “Performance” (Kor. Peopomeonseu) is not equivalent to the English term in that it is more limited, referring to non-musical aspects such as acting, dancing, [bodily] movements, and visual elements rather than music sound. It seems that “performance” has a negative connotation when used by those involved in new music ensembles that emphasize musical aspects.

perform for long after graduating from college, and few women's drumming groups last a long time compared to men's or mixed-gender groups. This is often due to the disruptions of marriage, pregnancy, and childbirth, which are sometimes considered to cause discordance among members as well as financial problems.

This chapter surveys fourteen contemporary drumming groups—men's, mixed-gender, and women's groups; most accounts and observations are from my field research in 2011. Most are “new drumming” groups that have created styles based on traditional Korean drumming but incorporating instruments and performance styles from other cultures. The first section draws a picture of selected professional drumming groups—either men's or mixed-gender—currently popular in Korea and sometimes recognized outside Korea, and examines how gender is perceived and/or performed in these groups and among their members. The second section introduces several women's drumming groups, whether extant or not, followed by a discussion of their main issues and concerns: performance repertoire and performance activities in relation to marriage, pregnancy, and children; artistic imperatives; and funding.

This chapter also explores these groups' strategies of emphasizing “femininity.” Most women's groups pursue a strategy of emphasizing “feminine” qualities to differentiate themselves from men or men's groups to some degree: developing dancing and/or singing skills; paying close attention to aspects of appearance such as clothing and make-up; and concentrating on sophistication. I see this set of strategies as having two distinct, contradictory outcomes. While these “emphasized femininities” may be in part an expression of resistance to the dominant—“masculine”—drumming style, at the same time they conform to internalized concepts of “femininity” drawn from gender constructions influenced particularly by contemporary media.



## New Drumming Groups

I have selected several new drumming groups—Puri, Gongmyoung, Sonagi Project, *Noreum Machi*, Dulsori and U-Hee—which, excluding Puri, are all active and known for their distinct and established drumming styles in the field. Some groups perform predominantly their own compositions, experimenting with traditional musical elements and instruments as well as those from other cultures, while others perform traditional drumming repertoire as well as new compositions based on traditional musical elements. They are all either men's groups or mixed-gender groups; therefore, after introducing these groups' aims, repertoires, and practices, I also examine how these groups and their members perform gender and to what extent the presence of female members play a role within the group dynamics.

### Puri

Puri (lit. disentangling/solving; often used in a repertoire of shaman ritual), the first “*changjak taak* group,” formed in 1993 to perform new compositions based on traditional Korean rhythmic patterns, using traditional Korean percussion instruments.<sup>72</sup> Puri was made up of four men educated in traditional music in the conservatory and trained in composition. The group's leader, Won Il, wanted to challenge the dominant repertoire and performance styles:

In 1993, when Puri was formed, there were a great number of *samulnori* groups around the country that were dreaming of the same goal. I was sick of it as a composer. Whereas *samulnori* groups played one repertoire made up of five to six rhythmic patterns for ten minutes, Puri focused on one rhythmic pattern and showed all possible variations of it.

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<sup>72</sup> I start with Puri because their experiments influenced many drumming groups and *changjak gugak* ensembles. Puri's membership has changed considerably over time, and the group was inactive when I visited Korea in 2011. However, former Puri members, including Won Il, Min Youngchi, and Chang Jae Hyo, reunited for a 20th anniversary concert at Yeourak Festival in 2013. Won Il was still an active performer and composer, leading the ensemble Baramgot.

Puri made new music, with *samulnori* instruments, which no other *samulnori* group tried. (Won Il 7/13/10)

Furthermore, Puri was interested in composing new repertoire and drumming styles, based on the concepts of “modernity” and “improvisation.” For Won Il, “modernity” represents a contemporary sensibility different from the past due to changes in lifestyle, labor, the way of feeling, and tension. For example, Puri expressed maximum tension by performing extremely rapidly on traditional instruments and then abruptly stopping. Won Il also introduced his own concept of improvisation: not to simply “replay” or play others’ music, but to keep communicating with one’s own music. In our interview, he emphasized the need for both a desire to keep changing music and the talent for realizing or articulating those changes.

### **Gongmyoung**

Following Puri, Gongmyoung (lit. resonance), another *changjak taak* group made up of four men, formed in 1997; it is known for being the longest performing group among “new music” ensembles.<sup>73</sup> While they performed *samulnori* repertoire at the beginning of their performance activities, they have been experimenting with new music; this involves not only musical instruments that they invented, like the “bam drum” (see Figure IV-1) made of bamboo tubes and the “electronic *janggu*,” but also instruments from outside Korea. The instruments they played at the Yeourak festival in 2011 included a wide spectrum of pitched and unpitched percussion instruments, as well as melodic instruments such as guitar, harmonica, *piri* (double-reed), and didgeridoo.

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<sup>73</sup> The leader denied that they are a percussion group, saying that their image as a percussion group is probably derived from the fact that they played electronic *janggu* at the beginning of their performance activities. They have also been considered a fusion music ensemble, and now are more often classified as a world music ensemble.



**Figure IV-1:** Gongmyoung’s performance with “bam drum” © Gongmyoung

A unique quality in Gongmyoung’s performance is their development of a repertoire played with bam drums, which gives rise to a “playful and fun” atmosphere (Sutton 2003). During concerts, they engage the audience by demonstrating how to make bam drums and by having audience members play the instruments; the audience participation seems to appeal to diverse age groups, and positive responses from the audience have motivated them to develop new instruments and new music. Recently, they received a positive evaluation of the piece “bomulseom,” which they made more colorful by accommodating Western melodic phrases, played on the recorder to traditional Korean rhythmic patterns.

### **Sonagi Project**

Similar to Puri and Gongmyoung, Sonagi (lit. rain shower) Project was initiated by the leader Chang Jae Hyo in 2006, due to an interest in making experimental music based on drumming, particularly *janggu* performance. Chang Jae Hyo is a talented artist who studied

*pansori*, *ajaeng* (seven-stringed bowed zither), and drumming. He has had an extensive performance career through working as a member of the new music ensembles Puri, Seulgidung, and Binalog, and as an artistic director in Rhyta and Dulsori. Sonagi Project generally includes Chang Jae Hyo; Ryu Seungpyo, who has experience in shamanic drumming; and women drummers from the female drumming group Rhyta. There have been some membership changes depending on circumstances; there were two men and three women (including only one Rhyta member) when they were touring throughout the Northeast region of the United States in the fall of 2012.



**Figure IV-2:** Sonagi Project's *janggu* performance, led by Chang Jae Hyo (right)  
© Sonagi Project

Sonagi Project has performed new compositions based on *pungmul*, shamanic drumming, and traditional Korean singing, sometimes incorporating sabar drumming from Senegal. They intend to “emphasiz[e] more sentimental, soft, and melodic elements rather than dynamics,

without any commentary, ‘performance’ and video art” that are often presented in contemporary performances. That is, they are more interested in the subtle qualities of the music, and want the audience to focus on musical aspects rather than on extramusical parts of the performance. Their first program, “The Forest of Wind,” was an experiment with making a “*janggu* orchestra,” influenced by Senegalese sabar drumming.<sup>74</sup> Interestingly, Chang Jae Hyo explicitly said that their music was influenced by Senegalese sabar drumming: he adopted its technique as well its arrangements in his music, having been impressed by it at a festival in Japan in 1994. The desire to make music similar to sabar but with *janggu* motivated him to initiate the Sonagi Project.

When their first program was performed in 2008, it was not easily understood by the general public, according to Chang Jae Hyo. Even though he liked the program, he has not been able to develop it due to a lack of attention from the audience:

The program started with Western style of [drumming], followed by harmonious drumming with [low-pitched] bass and high-pitched *janggu*, then performing a more traditional style of drumming, and ending with the solo performance. This symbolizes traveling in the present, the past, and back to the present. I think this was not bad. I am eager to do this program again, but it didn’t work in Korea. The Korean audiences look for something spectacular, dynamic, and magnificent. That’s why we had to change it. (Chang Jae Hyo 4/14/12)

Chang Jae Hyo asserted that they have been trying to find a way their music can be enjoyed by the general public as well as drummers. At the Yeourak festival in 2010, they tried to make their music easier for the audience to understand through a more dynamic repertoire. Nevertheless, the guest drummer Choi Junil, who joined the U.S. tour in 2012, pointed out that the general audience may not be able to follow continuous changes of fast rhythmic patterns (Choi Junil 4/14/12).

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<sup>74</sup> According to Yim Mijoung, the former member of Rhyta, Chang Jae Hyo wished to make a “*janggu* orchestra” with 30 *janggu* players, but they were not able to recruit enough people to produce the grand sound that they hoped for.

## Noreum Machi

Unlike the new music ensembles that I have introduced so far, Noreum Machi (the term usually refers to the best among leaders of drumming troupes; here it means “best performers”) generally performs some traditional repertoire of *pungmul*, shamanic drumming, and *pansori*, as well as new compositions primarily played with Korean percussion. Founded in 1993, Noreum Machi boasted some masters in traditional music—including one of the pioneers of *samulnori*, Lee Kwang-Soo—among their first members. At that time, they intended to embrace other performing arts such as *pansori*, folk songs, and shamanic music, as opposed to the *samulnori* groups that played only drums and percussion. In 1995, Kim Ju Hong, a student of Kim Duk Soo and Lee Kwang-Soo and the youngest in the group, became the leader. As of 2011, Noreum Machi, composed of four drummers (including one female drummer, Oh Hyun-ju) and one wind player, presented itself as a “New Wave Korean Music Group.”

Noreum Machi pursued performing arts based on traditional Korean musical elements—rhythmic patterns (*jangdan*) and ornamentation (*sigimsae*)—that could appeal to an international audience. Following the leader and artistic director who sought “both the depth and variety of tradition,” the members have not only played drums, but have also tried to learn some melodic instruments, according to Oh Hyun-ju (7/16/10). Noreum Machi became known in Korea because Kim Ju Hong taught drumming to the actors featured in the popular film *King and the Clown* (2005).<sup>75</sup> In 2011, they were presenting a crossover performance, in collaboration with

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<sup>75</sup> *King and the Clown* (2005, directed by Lee Jun-Ik) is a historical drama set in the Joseon Dynasty. Involving *gwangdae* (entertainers) from a *namsadang* troupe and King Yeonsangun (1476-1506), the film focused on traditional performing arts with homosexual themes. It was successful both commercially and critically.

foreign music, dance, or performance groups once a month in Korea.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, they have performed on international stages since the late 2000s; their showcase at the global performing arts conference and marketplace APAP (Association of Performing Arts Presenters) in 2008 impressed marketers, and they have toured North America as well as other continents.

Noreum Machi has made a special effort for the international audience. For example, Oh Hyun-ju stated that they made the sound of *ggwaenggwari* less audible to those unfamiliar with it because it is high-pitched and “extremely penetrating.” Furthermore, because they usually performed at festivals, they believed that the audience should be able to dance while they were playing:

Korean music is not easy to dance to, especially the one made up of 5 and 10 beats. So we studied to make it possible for the international audience to dance to it...Also we created the so-called “voice percussion,” which the audience can laugh along with. We considered the audience’s laughing as a sign of their enjoying and understanding our music. (Oh Hyun-ju 5/27/11)

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<sup>76</sup> When I interviewed Oh Hyun-ju in July of 2010, they were preparing for the 36th concert of the crossover series, in which they would collaborate with a group from Mongolia. She recounts that she is always “excited and at the same time worried/nervous about working with new people” (7/16/10).



**Figure IV-3:** Noreum Machi's performance with *ggwaenggari* © Noreum Machi

Noreum Machi's concern for the audience extended to their repertoire choices. Kim Ju Hong worked on how percussion can produce good music without "sounding boring," in harmony with vocals, melodies, and movements (Kim Ju Hong 5/7/11). Realizing that new compositions may sound interesting initially but boring after repeated performances, Oh Hyun-ju valued "tradition" as the core in their music; she believed that something new would come out of it as she keeps studying it.

## **Dulsori**

Similar to Noreum Machi, Dulsori (lit. field sound) is also recognized in the world market. Dulsori, founded in 1984, intended to present various traditional performing arts such as theatre play, masked dance, and traditional drumming that used to be performed at outdoor



festivals; according to their website, they aim to “break the barriers between the players and the audience in staging our performances.” They pursue a “fusion” musical style by incorporating Western musical instruments, especially the keyboard, and exploring foreign musical instruments, as other drumming groups did in the late 1990s through 2000s. Their program “World Beat Binari,” performed at the world music festival WOMAD in 2005, appealed to international audiences; this made it possible to open a London branch in 2006, and to continuously tour Europe, Africa, Asia, North and South America. As of 2011, however, they were performing new compositions primarily played with *buk*—*beopgo* (large barrel drum that used to be performed at Buddhist temples) and *modeumbuk* (see Figure IV-4)—and incorporating traditional singing and traditional Korean melodic instruments. Over the last few years, during which Chang Jae Hyo was an artistic director, the group has gained a reputation for improved musical quality.



**Figure IV-4:** Dulsocki members playing with *beopgo* in 2008; *modeumbuk* in the foreground © Dulsocki

Dulsocki's performance style is characterized by powerful drumming and dynamics, appealing to contemporary audiences. According to Ha Taekhu (11/16/11), at one point the group's members were eager to adopt non-Korean instruments to create a fusion style. However, this brought them some criticism for their lack of "Koreanness"; for example, a foreign organizer asked "Why do [they] use jembe, keyboard, cymbals?" Others commented that "the music [they] were making sounded like old-fashioned music from 1970-1980s." As a result, they returned to traditional instruments and *modeumbuk*. Ha Taekhu shared with me that their performance of *modeumbuk* was an "imitation" of other groups' performances:

At that time, "Nanta" had been created, and many drumming groups actively involved in the performing field played *modeumbuk*. Groups such as Ppurippae, Dudeurak, and Eolssu started playing *modeumbuk* in 1998 or 1999, one or two years before we did. They were already famous for performing *samulnori*. We started in 2000, by imitating them. There was one member who used to play *taiko*, so we learned a lot from him. We also

obtained materials of Ppurippae and Dudeurak and imitated them, following the director's philosophy that "we can get our own by imitating others." (Ha Taekhu 11/16/11)

Ha Taekhu remembered that, as time went by, Dulsori developed different styles from the models they imitated; he believed they created their own style through this process. One female drummer, Kim Haram, believed that their *modeumbuk* performance had a unique color compared to Japanese *taiko* drumming and the *modeumbuk* performances of other Korean drumming groups:

*Modeumbuk* performance is often compared to Japanese *taiko* drumming in that both are considered to lack the round bodily movements and rich breathing that are found in the performance of traditional Korean drums. There are the different ways in which drummers move their arms when striking the drum with sticks: they strike in vertical motion in *taiko* drumming, whereas their vertical movements, in Korean drumming, curve outward before striking the drum.<sup>77</sup> Therefore, this differentiates "ways of being enveloped in a circle"; it is believed that Korean drumming carries a strong sense of "being enveloped in a circle." So, we are trying to express that sense while playing. (Kim Haram 8/20/11)

In other words, they tried to make their bodily movements more "round" and their breathing more "rich" as expressed in traditional Korean drumming. According to Kim Haram, they were recently told that some Japanese *taiko* groups are similar to them, the reverse of what they have heard in the past. According to Ha Taekhu, they often heard that Dulsori was commercially oriented, but their intent has been to spread traditional Korean culture abroad, rather than selling their "performance."

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<sup>77</sup> This primarily depends on where the skin is located. The skins of Korean drums are vertical to the ground, whereas the skins of *modeumbuk*, similar to those of *daiko*, are parallel to it.

## U-Hee

U-Hee (lit. play), formed in 2004, is made up of six men who studied *yeonhui* at Hanyejong.<sup>78</sup> U-Hee started with four men who graduated from the National High School of Traditional Arts; later, one man and three women were recruited, although now there are no women. According to the leader Lee Sungjae (11/3/11), the members grew up in an environment in which they “naturally” appreciate traditional music due to the Korean government’s policy of promoting traditional music; they were considered “the generation that accepts ‘tradition’ in modern ways.” Therefore, what they do is not limited by genre, whether traditional, “fusion,” or “*changjak*”; rather, they are interested in “sensibly” making music with a theme.

U-Hee aims to use their sentimentality to create a new Korean performing art through an equal and democratic working process. They differentiate themselves from other musical groups in the way of making music, with neither a director who sets rules, nor a composer who takes charge of the repertoire; instead, any member can suggest a theme for performance, and the group exchanges ideas on that theme. They believe that this allows them to produce more “humorous” works, some of which have more explosive power and thus garner more attention from the audience. U-Hee did draw much laughter and applause from audiences at the concert organized by National Gugak Center in 2011. They performed a creative new repertoire based on traditional *yeonhui*, incorporating masked dance, story-telling, acrobatics, and *pungmul*. They also presented a new style of drumming performance, which omitted the standard circle-based ground formations and added new percussion instruments such as the *gankogui*, a bell used in Ewe drumming in Ghana.

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<sup>78</sup> U-Hee (Kor. yuhui) literally means “play.” Combining U (“you”) and Hee (“pleasure”) implies “we will give you pleasure.”

## Gender Performance

So far, I have introduced six musical groups whose performance is substantially oriented toward drumming. On the one hand, they have created new music and styles of performance out of “tradition,” challenging the dominant practice to varying degrees. On the other hand, they continue to represent the gender conceptions and perceptions found in the male-dominant realm, in contrast to the innovations in their music-making.

The men’s groups Puri and Gongmyoung did not explicitly intend to exclude women from their group. In the case of Puri, Won Il stated that percussion instruments demand much physical power like athletics, and thus that “articulating the dynamics with athleticism may need more masculine power (laugh)” (Won Il 7/13/10). This statement suggests that drumming is still conceived as ideally a “masculine” performance. U-Hee went from mixed-gender to all-men; Lee Sungjae explained that when they had female members, two members became a couple but soon broke up, which resulted in some discomfort among members; eventually, one member of the couple left the group. He further explained the tendency in which “if there is a female member in the team, one may feel about her as a women rather than colleague.” They seem to disregard the possibility of same-sex relationships or attraction.

All of the men’s groups have attributed some degrees of “masculine” quality to their performance. Won Il recalled that Puri’s music was “pretty masculine”: “it was sometimes soft and delicate, but it naturally expressed masculine tension and masculine dynamics as a men’s group” (Won Il 7/13/10). Gongmyoung also recalled their earlier drumming performance played with *taepyeongso* and *buk*, in which they “played *buk* more aggressively, as if riding a horse.” They reflected that it was “quite childish/immature,” but remembered that young women

audience members were crazy about it. While Puri and Gongmyoung approached “masculine” aspects in terms of “physicality” or “aggressiveness,” Lee Sungjae from U-Hee and Ha Taekhu from Dulsori asserted that they present their “masculinity” through their body. Lee Sungjae recounted that U-Hee emphasized explicitly “masculine” qualities in their performances, especially through their bodies:

Even though our bodies are not so excellent, I consider them one of our strengths. It is necessary to express men’s sexuality by showing their bodies, isn’t it? It is often criticized that *gugak* is only for those who do *gugak*...I thought that wearing *hanbok* [traditional clothing]<sup>79</sup> is too rigid and conservative; the modified *hanbok* style is more practical than before, though. (Lee Sungjae 11/03/11)

For example, U-Hee members wore a modified *hanbok* without sleeves in black, not as loose as a traditional *hanbok* but a more fitted design, when playing *pangut* (refer to Figure I-1, III-1 and III-2 to see general *pungul/samulnori* outfits). According to Lee Sungjae, presenting their bodies on stage expresses their “sexuality” as well as challenging the practice of wearing *hanbok* in the circle of Korean music. Ha Taekhu, who usually takes off his shirt in the last part of a performance (see Figure IV-5), shared his own intent:

I have an intention. When I take off my shirt, I hear either shouting or booing/hooting. Then, both sound similar. So, I am used to it. I feel a catharsis or orgasm that I can’t feel in a normal activity. I feel thrilled by the fact that I do something special in front of the audience and then the audience gets enthusiastic about it, particularly by the expectation that they will see my bodily movements when my energy is the most explosive. This is the psychological expectation that women will like it, rather than expressing my sexuality. (Ha Taekhu 11/16/11)

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<sup>79</sup> *Hanbok*, which Koreans consider traditional clothing, is a style from the Joseon Dynasty.



**Figure IV-5:** Ha Taekhu (center) at Dulsori’s performance © Dulsori

Ha Taekhu emphasized that he did not intend to appeal to audiences with his “sexuality” but to make them impressed by the energy he expressed in his performance. It seems to me, however, that his practice of taking off his shirt in performance could easily be considered an expression of “masculinity” and “sexuality,” particularly considering that, since the 2000s, men’s bodies have become a form of capital and a commodity in Korean popular culture and Korean men in general have started to cultivate a muscular body (Yoon Joe Won 2010). Ha Taekhu added that his “showmanship” was not what the director of Dulsori preferred; in fact, the director considered some drumming groups who wore revealing clothing “prostitutes” when they are women, and disliked the pursuit of commercial success by “stimulating the peripheral nerves.”

Dulsori and Sonagi Project have women performers in the group. Some of their members shared with me that the reason was that women were available as drummers. This did not mean

that there were more women than men in the field in terms of numbers, but that it was hard to scout or hire the types of men they were looking for. Ha Taekhu explained the circumstances:

The reason why most members are women is that there are very few male drummers available in the field. Therefore, it is too expensive to scout them; it is much harder to scout men than women among four-year college graduates. Why wouldn't we need men? We need those who can carry heavy stuff and have enough physical power to play percussion. But, those guys choose stable jobs like a national or government-associated *gugak* orchestra. (Ha Taekhu 11/16/11)

He recalled that there were mostly men in the company when he entered, when they mostly played drums; but when the program World Beat Binari was created, they needed those who could play melodic instruments, and thus the women members increased. Since the performance was based on playing drums, all incoming members who played a melodic instrument had to learn drumming as well, mostly *modeumbuk* performance. When he came back from his military service he found that there were mostly women. Now, "women playing drums" has become the main feature of Dulsori performance. Yim Mijoung gave a similar reason for why Sonagi Project had more women members:

[The leader Chang Jae Hyo] wished to work with men like those whom Kim Duk Soo worked with in *samulnori* performance, but it's not easy to work with those drummers because they are more money-oriented. That's why he worked with those of us who were around him. (Yim Mijoung 8/17/11)

Both Dulsori and Sonagi Project had a relatively large number of women performers; however, their style of performance differed in terms of gender. Dulsori was considered more "masculine" by their peers, while Sonagi Project was considered more "feminine" by its members. This might be because Dulsori performances were primarily based on "*buk*," which was considered "masculine;" Sonagi Project focused on "*janggu*," which was considered "feminine." Dulsori's female members were often considered "masculine," (e.g. "they are almost like men") and some of their peers viewed them as playing a leading role in performances. Kim Haram (8/20/2011) shared her observation that women who entered Dulsori



happened to be physically and mentally stronger, even as the groups' male members seemed to be more "feminine." She emphasized that "any woman cannot do this because what they do is a bit intense, although the culture of Dulsori is not masculine." She added, "But it doesn't mean [female members] are ignorant, but wilder and more ambitious... They are like the Sun...bright and hot...young and energetic" (11/17/11). In contrast, Yim Mijoung explained that the musical color of the Sonagi Project cannot help but be "feminine." She shared with me that the leader had "definitely a feminine aspect," including being "sensitive" and "concerned about melodic elements as well as the overall outline, unlike other drummers" (8/17/11). She added that the leader composed the main frame, and the rest of the members, predominantly women, made the details. Once again, these perceptions of "femininity" and "masculinity" match up with stereotypical expectations of what women and men are supposed to do and be.

### **Women's drumming groups**

Contemporary women's drumming groups began to form in the 1990s when the professional drumming field was overwhelmed with *samulnori* performances and embraced new drumming groups that experimented with "music," "performance," or instruments. The first women's groups in the 1990s played mostly the same repertoire as other *samulnori* groups did. Since the late 1990s, women's drumming groups have adopted the trend of playing *modeumbuk* with an emphasis on "performance" or have concentrated on musical aspects. While some groups formed by themselves, others were scouted and trained by a production company.

This section begins by introducing some women's drumming groups—San-ddal-a mul-ddal-a, Assim, and Dongcheon—that entered the male-dominated realm of professional drumming in the 1990s but are not considered active in the performing field. In that period of

time, some large drumming groups seemed to contain women's teams as well—such as Baudeogi and Assim in Hanullim, Dadeumi in Ddeunsoe, and Yeosadang in Bburippae; nonetheless, I consider the first contemporary women's group to be that formed by its members without any association with other drumming groups, which is San-ddal-a mul-ddal-a. I will then discuss other women's groups—Haedanghwa, DoDo, Taedong, Rhyta, and Noriggot—that have been active in the performing field until recently. Finally I will address the main issues and concerns that women's drumming groups confront from a gender perspective, as well as the strategies with which they survive in the drumming field.

### **San-ddal-a Mul-ddal-a**

San-ddal-a mul-ddal-a, formed in 1991, was made up of women drumming majors who graduated from the Seoul Institute of the Arts (previously called Seoul yejeon); Kim Yeong-eun, who joined one year later, became a leader as senior to the other members. The name San-ddal-a mul-ddal-a (lit. daughters along with mountain and water) means that the members are “daughters playing drums in the mountain and along the river.” They intended to show that women's groups can play drums as well as the men's groups that dominated the drumming field at the time. According to Kim Yeong-eun (11/11/11), they were able to perform *samulnori* repertoire in both sitting and standing positions.

San-ddal-a mul-ddal-a concentrated on building up their performance skills by taking lessons and through training at specialized music camps. They prepared to participate in drumming competitions, and earned the bronze medal at the 4<sup>th</sup> Seoul *gugak* competitions in 1993. However, they did not make enough money or get sufficient financial support to present their own concert; they only managed to pay for the rent of their practice room. Even though they sometimes played drums for other performing groups such as all-women *Changgeuk*

troupes (*Yeo-seong gukgeukdan*) and dance companies, they did not want to give drumming classes or lessons to make money, as many other drumming groups did. According to Kim Yeong-eun, they experienced member changes primarily because of their bad financial situation. Since Kim Yeong-eun left the group in 1997, San-ddal-a mul-ddal-a has been led by the only original member, Nam Giseon. Some drummers believed that the group became famous after they were featured in the television programming of the major Korean broadcasting company between 1998 and 1999, but this did not seem to have a large effect on their activities in the long term, and they were hardly ever seen in performance as of 2011.<sup>80</sup>

### **Assim**

Assim, made up of four women, belonged to the larger group Hanullim, led by Kim Duk Soo. The relationship between these women and Kim Duk Soo goes back to 1994 when he produced “samul gojeokdae,” a marching band made up of Korean percussion instruments played by 80 female high-school students, which performed at the opening ceremony of the National Sports Festival. Kim Duk Soo recruited three women from the marching band and formed Assim in 1995; the group broke up in 2001.

Assim had opportunities to perform at many *samulnori* performances organized by Hanullim; they usually performed *samulnori* repertoire in both sitting and standing position. A former member of Assim, Yoo Sojeong, believed that Assim members were the first women who played *samulnori pangut* while twirling the *sangmo*. Assim received the silver medal at the 7<sup>th</sup> *Samulnori* Competition in 1997.

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<sup>80</sup> They played drums on the MBC TV program Chingchan hapsida (Let's compliment), which was intended to commend those who contribute to the benefit of society through volunteering, public service, philanthropy, etc.

The break-up of Assim was motivated by the marriage of a member; however, unlike other women's groups, they have continued to meet with one another. As of 2011, each member had reentered the field: one was involved in producing drumming performances while studying in graduate school; one composed *gugak* pieces; one had started teaching drumming after graduating from college; and one taught drumming at the local educational branch of Hanullim.

### **Dongcheon**

Dongcheon (lit. the sky in the east), formed in 1998, was made up of five women drummers already involved in the drumming field. Some were members of the Seoul and Anseong *namsadang* troupes; the others were from Dadeumi and Yeosadang, respectively, the female teams within the drumming groups Ddeunsoe and Bburipae. There were some member changes; two senior members were consistent, but they eventually separated in 2008, and the remaining four members (except for the leader) formed the group DoDo.<sup>81</sup>

Dongcheon received “jangwon,” equivalent to the grand prize, in the *pungmul* category at the KBS 13<sup>th</sup> Gugak Competitions (Gugak daegyongyeon) in 2003, which was the first time that a women's group earned the grand prize. Jeong Wonyeong said to me that “our team is not inferior to male teams” (11/11/11). There are some online reviews of Dongcheon's performance that may support her statement:

I would like to give six stars, out of the maximum five stars. Generally female performances among many *taak* groups are less powerful and don't have strong composition, but instead concentrate on making them more beautiful...I was mesmerized by and happy with anjeunban *samulnori* of Dongcheon.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Jeong Wonyeong was unwilling to share with me why these members left Dongcheon. She informed me that one can find out about it since it was quite a scandal, but I was unable to find any information.

<sup>82</sup> This review is available at <http://cafe.naver.com/workplay/1105>, accessed on August 27, 2012.

I strongly recommend this group, because I was always inspired/moved by their performance. Above all, their composition/arrangement scores 100%.<sup>83</sup>

## Haedanghwa

After quitting San-ddal-a mul-ddal-a, Kim Yeong-eun was depressed for six months until she rented a practice room. In 2002 she formed Haedanghwa (sweetbrier), with other women who were using the same practice room. Haedanghwa was not an all-women's group, since there was one male member.<sup>84</sup> As of 2011, Haedanghwa had presented two concerts funded by the government, in which they performed new compositions based on shamanic music. According to Kim Yeong-eun, they were interested in incorporating shamanic music in their compositions partly because they liked it, and partly because they could expand the *samulnori* repertoire through it. They intended to represent the "originality" (lit. primitiveness) and "multi-functional performing arts" (lit. total entertainment) of shamanic rituals in their performance, while satisfying the aesthetics of contemporary audiences.

Kim Yeong-eun believed that a "feminine" quality is intrinsic to her music because she is a woman, even though she did not intend to emphasize a particular "feminine" aspect. She gave as an example that it has been naturally expressed in her works' titles:

As opposed to the names of compositions for *daebuk* [lit. large *buk*, also called *beopgo*] [in men's group] like "Cheon-ji-in" [lit. heaven, earth and man] and "The sound of sky" that generally imply grandeur, the title of my work for *daebuk* was "Eyes of grandmother." Even though it may sound like it is not matched with the image of *daebuk*, I have it performed with different movements, adding dance. (Kim Yeong-eun 11/11/11)

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<sup>83</sup> This review is available at <http://cafe.naver.com/fpcp/690>, accessed on August 27, 2012.

<sup>84</sup> When I asked, "Isn't it hard for him to be the only male member?" the leader Kim Yeong-eun replied that "He feels lonely...He is somewhat feminine."

She explained why she named the piece “Eyes of grandmother”: “When I saw elderly people waiting for buses or subways, I found their eyes as clear-eyed as the eyes of children, although their eyes represent so many years and struggles.” Haedanghwa, the name of her group, did not necessarily mean to refer to a flower, but she wanted to escape from the “macho” names which percussion groups tend to have.

## **Taedong**

Taedong (lit. fatal movement), led by Shin Heeyeon (b. 1980), started with five female students studying *yeonhui* at Hanyejong in 2002. Their specialization was drumming, but most of them, as *yeonhui* majors, also had some training in singing, dancing, theater, and acrobatics. According to Shin Heeyeon, their intent in making a women’s group was to prove that women were as capable as men; when she saw some junior women performing *yangsang*, one of the most difficult techniques, as well as men, she thought she should make a team with them. Making a women’s drumming group was in part a challenge to the normalized practice of recruiting male students for drumming performances; therefore, the first members of Taedong used to practice from 7am to 2am. They attended drumming competitions once a month, and received several prizes throughout 2002-2005. Shin Heeyeon shared with me that Taedong attended the *samulnori* competition organized by Kim Duk Soo for three consecutive years:

When we presented a new composition at our first trial, he left in the middle. During our second time, we heard “good job” from him. Then, for the third trial, we got positive comments like “How can women do that?” (Shin Heeyeon 5/7/11)

Shin Heeyeon believed that the evaluation committee recognized that her team showed “power” as well as details; she emphasized that they had been concentrating on articulating the details of foot movements and performing *jaban dwijipgi* more precisely than men. Therefore, they earned

the best prizes at drumming competitions in 2005. Shin Heeyeon was proud that after practicing for three years, they were not inferior to men in terms of power and speed.



**Figure IV-6:** Taedong's performance of *samulnori pangut* © Taedong

After receiving the grand prize, Taedong members were scouted by Kim Duk Soo. They were afraid that they might not be independent under his leadership, but they decided to join his group Hanullim so as to experience the wider world. One year after working with him, however, they confronted issues around finances and musical activities outside of that group. Shin Heeyeon found some limitations for women drummers within Kim Duk Soo's *samulnori* group, as they had to play the role of dancer rather than drummer, which was not what they wanted; ultimately, all but one Taedong member decided to leave his group. Taedong then added male members, and expanded their repertoire by incorporating *modeumbuk* and shamanic drumming styles. As of 2011, Shin Heeyeon was leading a mixed group along with her husband, who was also a drummer and the music director for her group.

## Rhyta

Rhyta (Kor. rita), a portmanteau from “RHYthm” and “fanTAsy,” was a female group created by a production company in 2002. According to the music director Chang Jae Hyo, they wanted to make a women’s drumming group imitating Puri. Rhyta started with four members scouted by the music director; another woman joined with the recommendation of their senior drummer. It took one year to prepare for their debut, since all of them specialized in the same instrument, *jangu*, and did not have experience playing drums in a team. According to Yim Mijoung (10/31/11), the aims of the production company and the music director conflicted: the company sought commerciality by emphasizing “femininity” (e.g. presenting pretty women) and using some degree of “performance,” whereas the music director was more passionate about making it more artistic musically. When Rhyta performed for the first time, musicality was still emphasized above commerciality, and they were not successful; the production company gave up Rhyta, but three members decided to remain with the music director.

As their performance at the Seoul Fringe Festival in 2003 received a positive response from the audience, Rhyta members were encouraged to play their own style without involving “performance.” They began to participate in concerts, sometimes doing joint performances with jazz groups, while consolidating their performance skills; they finally presented their own concert in 2007. Their repertoire was developed with substantial help from Chang Jae Hyo.

Yim Mijoung (7/11/08) shared with me that her peers considered Rhyta unique in two respects. First, the group highlighted more musical aspects by incorporating melodic elements, whereas most drumming groups emphasized the “performance” aspect for the sake of commerciality. Second, Rhyta emphasized specifically “feminine” qualities, as opposed to other women's groups that focus on technique and physical power so as to be on the same level as



men's groups. They performed “soft pieces that only women can express” as well as powerful pieces; they sometimes created a contrast between “bright” and “lyrical.” Yim Mijoung believed that Rhyta emphasized what men cannot express—“sentimentality and the picturesque.”



**Figure IV-7:** Rhyta’s promotional photo © Rhyta

Rhyta was inactive from January 2009 until 2011, when I was in Korea for field research, mainly because the leader Jung Hyun Ah was on maternity leave. The remaining two members were working for Sonagi Project while doing other jobs to support themselves financially.<sup>85</sup> Jung Hyun Ah returned in the spring of 2011, but simultaneously Yim Mijoung quit Rhyta.

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<sup>85</sup> Sharing a practice room with Chang Jae Hyo in 2008 led Rhyta members to join in performing for Sonagi Project.

According to Yim Mijoung (4/27/11), she faced some dissatisfaction with her performance activity, was interested in pursuing an academic career, and dealt with injuries. She had once believed that her team could last on the basis of human relationships, but she had grown skeptical; she also regretted that they were not able to sustain their performance activity in 2009, when they had started gaining attention as a creative musical group (10/31/11).

## **DoDo**

DoDo, formed in 2008, was composed of five women as of 2011, most in their twenties and with experience playing traditional drums. According to the group's leader, Jeong Wonyeong, DoDo pursues a new emphasis on the visual components of the performance of traditional drumming; Dongcheon, the predecessor of DoDo, had a similar interest, but was less active in cultivating visual aspects. The group performs both traditional repertoire and new compositions. Jeong Wonyeong was proud of this, as she believed that no other women's drumming groups play both and it was rare even among the whole range of drumming groups; she also pointed out that some drumming groups who focused on fusion style and emphasized *modeumbuk* performance could not play *samulnori* repertoire. She did not accept members who could not play *samulnori*, even if they had the visual assets—a pretty face and slim body—that she was seeking. DoDo has also been learning different genres, including b-boy, “acrobatic” and girl's hip hop, to expand their repertoire.

Jeong Wonyeong intended to establish the “color” of their group through the visual elements of face, appearance, clothing, and performance. She believed that the audience needed to be able to identify with the stage performers, and thus that it was important for them to represent shared contemporary perspectives and sensibilities. Such an emphasis on the visual

was one of her strategies for popularity, the other being the quality of the artistry; she did not consider popularity to be opposed to artistry. Her goal was to produce a performing art based on drumming, such as the long-running spectacle “Blue Man Group.”

DoDo has collaborated with b-boy groups since 2008, when they got to know the b-boy group LastForOne in Singapore. According to Jeong Wonyeong, LastForOne danced as well as using “performance,” and knew how to create dance movements appropriate for traditional music. The group has enjoyed collaborating with different b-boy groups because each had a unique color; recently, with the b-boy team Gambler, DoDo performed a show based on the story of a Western hip hop boy who meets a Korean girl.

### **Noriggot**

Noriggot, which implies “flower grown in the field of ‘play’,” is a female *yeonhui* group made up of female college students studying traditional *yeonhui* who specialize primarily in drumming but who also had learned singing, theatrical play, and masked dance. Since only three Korean schools—Hanyejong, Chungang University, and Sehan University—had *yeonhui* programs, the members often studied under the same teachers and thus worked with the same regional *pungmul* groups. When they started as a study group in 2009, there were about 40 students willing to join to form a women’s group, but only five remained by the time I interviewed them in 2011.<sup>86</sup> They were 25-28 years old and concentrated largely on studying for two years after graduating from college, while also working for money—some were teaching *gugak*, while others worked for *gugak* orchestras associated with local governments. The last

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<sup>86</sup> I met four members: Lee So Ra from Chungang University, Im Irang and Yoo Rida from Sehan University, and Kim Yeong-eun from Hanyejong. The fifth member was traveling in India at the time.

time I talked with the leader Kim So Ra, in 2014, there were nine members, including vocalists, percussionists, and other instrumentalists.

While Noriggot members were preparing to put on a show in February 2012, they were also involved in playing music for other musical groups. For example, in the dance performance of the Preservation Society for Mahun Dance derived from Gyeonggi *dodanggut* (shaman rituals for village in Gyeonggi province), in which women never play musical instruments except for shamans, they played percussive instruments; they had a few women as guest musicians performing the vocals and melodic instruments. Some Noriggot members had also been involved in performing for Jeongeup *nongak* and Jinju-Samcheonpo *nongak*, since they were taught by the leaders of both *nongak* groups in college.

To prepare for the February 2012 performance, they were meeting twice a week. According to Kim So Ra, although they gave a performance in 2010 comprised of traditional *yeonhui* repertoire, now they were going to perform new compositions, adding their own “color.” To find this, they were experimenting with presenting what only women could do, as well as what other *yeonhui* groups did. They believed that they could develop a wider spectrum of repertoire because the members trained at three different schools and thus held the different strengths of each school.

## **Major Concerns and Issues of Women’s Drumming Groups**

### **Performance Repertoire**

The women’s groups that formed in the 1990s predominantly performed the mainstream *samulnori* repertoire of the time. They often received attention for being women, such as when San-ddal-a mul-ddal-a appeared on television, or when Dongcheon received the first grand prize

for a women's group at the drumming competition. They might have been valued for the novelty of women performing *samulnori*, especially *seonban* (playing *pungmul* in standing position, wearing *sangmo*); they were considered to be "doing as well as men" by a male peer.

Sometimes, however, their techniques were negatively evaluated by other peers: they were considered "not great compared to men's groups," or "fine for a women's group." A female drummer shared her opinion about the earlier women's drumming groups:

They were different from men's groups, in terms of skills/techniques. They were women. Dongcheon was a little better...At that time, women were women. But, now it has changed. Women, probably those who are my juniors, are almost the same as men. Sanddal-a mul-ddal-a became famous after appearing on TV. Dongcheon was famous; they did well at the beginning, but there have been some member changes. I know some members from Dongcheon but they were not the same as men. It was just meaningful that women did *seonban*.

Given her expressions (e.g. "different from men's groups" in terms of skills; "not the same as men"), she implied that these women's groups were not good as men's groups.

In the 2000s, women's groups started to adopt the trends already adopted by other drumming groups: performing *modeumbuk*, emphasizing the "performance" aspect, and/or performing new drumming styles, sometimes mixing different musical elements or emphasizing the "music" aspect. Dongcheon and Taedong, which both started as *samulnori* groups, expanded their repertoires by playing selected drum dance pieces and *modeumbuk*.<sup>87</sup> Rhyta and Haedanghwa performed their own compositions, respectively emphasizing "music" and incorporating elements of shamanic rituals. DoDo developed a new drumming style emphasizing "performance," although they played the *samulnori* repertoire. Nevertheless, most

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<sup>87</sup> The drum dance repertoires that women's drumming groups most often perform are *ogomu* (lit. five drum dance) and Jindo bukchum (lit. *buk* dance from the Jindo Island), which are the primary repertoire for female dancers. In this dance repertoire, the performers play drums in a limited way because drums play a decorative role in dancing, and they wear female *hanbok* that emphasizes their female bodies to some extent.

of the women's groups did not strictly adhere to a single style—whether *samulnori* or their new drumming style—but transcended stylistic barriers and were open to new influences.

This attitude towards repertoire seemed to contribute to Yim Mijoung's positive evaluation of women's drumming groups as they have progressed over time. She evaluated current women's drumming groups in a more positive way, especially in comparison with earlier groups:

I think that it has gotten better. In the past, it was hard to think of making women's groups, and, even after they were formed, it was hard for them to get recognized but easy for them to be ridiculed. The situation has improved, however, in that women's groups have their own vision, make efforts to survive, and try something new musically, compared to those that emphasized commercial aspects with their clothes off. Also, it is an improvement that they are formed by themselves as opposed to those in the past that were made up for commercial purposes. It is hard for them to survive, but this is not just for women's groups, but for all. (Yim Mijoung 8/17/11)

She considers current women's groups who try something new of their own accord an improvement on the past, when they were created by production companies and performed commercially oriented repertoire.

### **Performance Activities**

As of 2011, most of the women's groups examined above were inactive in the performing field. Some had disbanded: San-ddal-a mul-ddal-a and Dongcheon still existed with one original member, but focused on teaching rather than performing. Some had been active in the performing field until recently: Rhyta was inactive because the leader had been on maternity leave for two years, and Taedong was performing in a limited manner due to the leader's pregnancy. Others were mostly developing the programs for their own concerts: Haedanghwa were looking for government funding to stage their concert, and Noriggot were preparing for the concert they were to present in a few months. The others were actively performing, but mostly

on small stages; only DoDo was busy performing regardless of the venue. The reason why women's groups did not look active in the performing field, even though some were performing, seems to be related more to the fact that they were often excluded from the programs organized by the major government-associated performing institutes (e.g. Yeourak festival), unlike those drumming groups introduced in the first section of this chapter.

Members of women's drumming groups generally leave the group for different reasons, which are not so different from the reasons why women members in mixed-gender groups Dulsori and Noreum Machi quit: marriage, pregnancy/childbirth, discordance among members, and financial problems. The case of Yim Mijoung, who had just quit the group Rhyta when I arrived in Korea for field research in the spring of 2011, illustrates the impossibility of a simple explanation for someone leaving a group. First, since Rhyta was mostly working for Sonagi Project, she was tasked with training guest members of the Sonagi Project, and was not being involved in creative activities such as repertoire expansion and developing her drumming skills. She was also not pleased that the other member of Rhyta had to work for another drumming group to make money, and was exhausted from assisting her teacher in class. She also wanted to keep studying: her ultimate plan was to seek a Ph.D. in education and to have a stable job afterward. Most crucially, she had problems with her knees and needed surgery.

While these concerns were specific to Yim Mijoung, they were consistent with many of the issues surrounding the longevity of women's groups in general. Those in the drumming field generally acknowledged that women's groups did not last long and disbanded easily compared to mixed-gender and men's groups. Nevertheless, individuals held different conceptions of why that was the case. Some people thought that these factors were more related to women's characters. Kim So Ra observed that "quite a few women's groups existed about three or four

years ago” but that they disbanded because of the “discord among members.” She found that men’s groups usually lasted longer because they easily got over troubles among members by drinking together, but “women tend to see what they confront at the moment rather than in the long future.” Kim Yeong-eun, from her experience of leading music ensembles, also located the reason in women’s stereotypical qualities:

While men just do what they have decided to do once they decide, women are easily distracted. For example, they leave the team when family issues occur, when something is not going well with them, or when they don’t earn enough money. I know one member whose family didn’t live well left the group so as to help her family’s finances. (Kim Yeong-eun 11/11/11)

From a similar perspective, Lee Sungjae saw that “women have different priorities from men”:

Men usually work hard to the extent of risking their lives, but women risk their lives on many things. When something urgent and unexpected occurs men tend to complain about it but eventually do it for the team. Men seem to concentrate on teamwork, whereas women seem to have many priorities other than teamwork. (Lee Sungjae 11/03/11)

These drummers conceptualized women as “short-sighted,” “easily distracted,” and “having less teamwork,” in comparison to men. But these opinions also show that they saw the issue through their conceptualization of different gender stereotypes.

Some drummers approached the issue from the perspective of how women would be socially situated, taking into account marriage, pregnancy, and childcare. The senior male drummer Nam Gimun (6/21/11) believed that marriage would be the biggest hurdle for women; “men can keep their career until they die, but women give up unless they have a supportive husband.” Jung Hyun Ah, who had performed as a replacement for the members of Dongcheon who were on maternity leave, pointed out that pregnancy and childbirth are critical components in the longevity of women’s groups:

Men’s group may have a problem when members have to leave for military service for about two years, but it is usually done before graduating from college. So, they can keep their group together as long as they get along. In contrast, women’s groups seem to have



members more often in and out. In my case, I was able to do performance activity after giving birth, because my husband and mother-in-law have been helping to take care of my baby while I'm out. (Jung Hyun Ah 11/06/11)

Jung Hyun Ah emphasized that it would not be easy for women to work outside the house once they get married, and especially difficult after childbirth. She also believed that those women involved in a group would need more time to work together to create an effective team dynamic, as opposed to soloists or accompanists who could be more flexible with their schedule. Yim Mijoung, according to her observation of her peers, saw that the biggest hurdle for women seemed to be taking care of a baby:

I think that women can't do anything when their baby is sick, but men can. It seems to me that men have a responsibility to take care of the whole family, while women take care of babies. I see them often quit their jobs because of their children. (Yim Mijoung 4/27/11)

Yim Mijoung's perspective had changed since watching her colleagues giving birth; working used to be the first priority for her, but she was not 100% sure about what would happen when she gave birth in the future. Kim Yeong-eun, who has two daughters, was able to perform until she was in her eighth or ninth month of pregnancy, although she had to find someone to cover her position during her maternity leave. When she came back from the leave, however, she found that she felt excluded in many respects by the person who took her leading position while she was gone. This contributed to her decision to leave the group. It seems that childbirth may not only directly affect a woman's performance activities, but also indirectly impact the dynamics of the group.

Whereas the above drummers attributed the brief lifespan of women's groups to gender stereotypes or women's social roles as wife and mother, some drummers approached the issue from a musical or financial perspective. Won Il observed that "women's groups, after they were formed, did not create further new artistic repertoire by themselves," and thus disbanded. He

emphasized that the artistic imperative is important to their survival, although he still implied gender stereotypes in discussing musicality:

I think that women's groups need to compete with their creativity rather than power. But basically, unlike other artistic skills, musical skill needs a long period of training. For that training, one needs power. If a female performer plays as a soloist, what she presents can be [appealing] only when she has good technique and skill. It might be hard to obtain such good technique and skill. (Won Il 7/13/10)

Oh Hyun-ju also emphasized musicality. She observed that a group that “produced fruits hurriedly without establishing deep roots” did not last long, while those that attained their own color and musicality, even if it took time, have survived.

In contrast, Kim Yeong-eun believed that poor financial situations are the main reason members leave a group. When I met her in 2011, she was depressed because her group did not receive the governmental funding that would make it possible for her compositions to be performed on stage. As with San-ddal-a mul-ddal-a, Haedanghwa did not have a staff to prepare funding applications, and thus had a hard time applying for funding as well as composing music; she decided to give up submitting applications. For her, governmental support was unevenly distributed; a few teams—presumably recognized in the *gugak* field—seemed to always receive funding from every source. This created a self-reinforcing cycle, as a smaller group in terms of finances and staff was unable to get the money and support it would need to gain more money and support. Jeong Wonyeong, the leader of DoDo, also mentioned that financial stability was one of the difficulties her group confronted. She managed to give salaries to members because they were performing as much as possible and thus made money. She believed that making her group's finances stable required continuing to produce new repertoire; however, this demands time and energy, and is thus impossible under circumstances where they had to perform almost every day. Therefore, she asserted that they would need more government support for traditional

performing arts; she greatly envied the support Japanese performers receive from their government.

Issues of discordance among members, artistic imperatives, and financial difficulty may be applicable to all groups regardless of gender; however, women's roles as wife and mother, and the ways in which women's groups are systematically valued less, put an extra burden on women's groups, contributing heavily to their difficulty in remaining active.

### **“Femininity” as a Strategy**

Women in male-dominated environments are constantly negotiating their “femaleness”; they must display “‘unfeminine’ ambition and power,” yet also “look feminine” enough to project both a non-masculine and non-androgynous appearance (Rodin 1993:644). They “must be feminine yet not too feminine” (Reischer and Koo 2004: 313). Women in sports, for instance, are “expected to perform hegemonic femininity” to avoid being seen as “masculine” (Krane et al 2004: 316); the sports traditionally thought of as “feminine”—gymnastics, ice skating—are perceived so because of such a performance of “femininity,” while those in which women's participation is fairly recent—basketball, football (soccer)—require extra care in toeing the line between “feminine” and “athletic.” Furthermore, women in male-dominated work spaces often experience their bodies “as central to workplace dynamics,” and thus encounter issues around physical appearance, concerns with “scheduling” reproduction, and demands to perform or otherwise exploit their sexuality (Reischer 2000).

Most women's drumming groups share a strategy of pursuing “feminine” aspects to varying degrees, but there are differences in the practice and reception of these aspects. Groups formed in the early 1990s did not have a strong conceptualization of pursuing “femininity” as a

strategy. San-ddal-a mul-ddal-a recognized that a kind of “femininity” might be a way of differentiating themselves from men’s groups that were popular at the time, but they seemed to fail in conveying their “femininity” explicitly enough to ensure survival in the field. Similarly, Assim did not have a particular strategy because they were a part of Kim Duk Soo’s popular Hanullim; while Yoo Sojeong considered that the novelty of women playing drums at that time differentiated Assim from men’s groups, she imagined that they might have been more successful if they had promoted themselves as a female group. Along the same lines, Haedanghwa also did not intend to emphasize a particular “feminine” aspect in their performance, perhaps because Kim Yeong-eun, the leader and composer, believed that “femininity” would be inherent in her music because she is a woman.

The groups that emerged since the late 1990s began to utilize their “femininity” as a way of expressing distinctive characters and surviving in the commercial realm. Taedong, when all its members were women, “feminized” their practice in certain ways even as they sought to be taken as seriously as men were. According to Shin Heeyeon, their first priority was to play as well as others: women should play as strong and fast as men. The next priority was to perform in a sophisticated manner and emphasize their “feminine” character. Even though the repertoire they performed was almost identical of those other drumming groups, they tried to express “femininity” in their manner of dancing, how they moved their feet and hands while drumming, and facial expressions, by practicing in front of mirrors:

We tried to be pretty when playing *seoljanggu*; we practiced with our facial expressions. We were diligent in studying about how to become feminine. We were concerned about being pretty, when moving our body, even feet, and playing drums. I don’t think men are concerned about these things. (Shin Heeyeon 9/5/11)



**Figure IV-8:** A female member of Taedong, dancing with *sogo* © Taedong

Furthermore, they performed some dance repertoire, including the Jindo *buk* dance, to show “feminine, beautiful [body] lines.” Shin Heeyeon also mentioned that their stage costume emphasized their “femininity”:

Our clothing was pretty like a butterfly. It was beige and flowy. The design that shows our waist lines made us look like we had long legs. We looked like female warriors; we wore skirts but looked like warriors... Since we are women, we wanted to look pretty when performing. I emphasized and pursued what the feminine is like. (Shin Heeyeon 9/5/11)

Shin Heeyeon wanted the audience to comment that “they perform not only well but also beautifully,” rather than just that “their power is strong.” In this way, while she sought to build

physical strength at the level of men, she also appealed to the audience through her “feminine” beauty. Won Il mentioned his impression of Taedong’s performance:

I remember that Taedong was good in that they demonstrated what women can show. There was some kind of energy when women played drumming, which is hard to describe. I liked that energy expressed in Taedong. There is a socially constructed conception of percussion instruments—some expectation in terms of “power”—which seems to me that women cannot satisfy...Also, the softness, unique feeling, and attraction that femininity carries are hard to recognize, unless one pays attention to them. (Won Il 7/13/10)

His description of the performance in terms of “softness, unique feeling, and attraction that their femininity carries” may demonstrate that Taedong’s presentation of “femininity” worked as they hoped it would.

According to Yim Mijoung, Rhyta pursued “femininity” by specifically cultivating sentimentality and artistic delicacy in their performance, as opposed to the “masculinity” emphasized by other drumming groups. The leader Jung Hyun Ah, however, did not see things the same way as Yim Mijoung; she thought that the “femininity” depended on the pieces, although their music had less “masculinity” than other drumming groups:

We tried to find a solution. We differentiated the instrumentation of each piece, because different pieces with the same instruments might be considered the same. We used foreign percussion, featured synthesizer, and added singing. We had good responses. It seemed to work for those who were sick of *modeumbuk* performance. (Jung Hyun Ah 11/06/11)

These two members’ accounts share the idea of presenting their “femininity” through their music to some degree. In their first official concert, however, Rhyta wore clothing based on the modern *hanbok* style but with bare midriffs (see Figure IV-7).<sup>88</sup> The midriff has been a “site of erotic interest in many non-Western cultures for a long time,” and has recently been sexualized

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<sup>88</sup> In the late Joseon Dynasty, from the eighteenth century to nineteenth century, women’s *hanbok* was changed to emphasize “sexual attraction,” by disclosing the line of the upper body, influenced by the *hanbok* for gisaeng (Hong Na Young: 2006).

for the American commercial market (Gill 2009). The Korean practice of baring midriffs, common among female pop performers, seems inspired by the United States' female pop performers who do so as well. According to Gong Bitna, the most recent member of Rhyta, the choice of this clothing predated her arrival; she assumed that this might have been intended to make them more "feminine" or beautiful. She was not comfortable with showing her midriff, and was advised that she should not eat much before a concert. However, this strategy did not always work as intended. Lee Hana, the student of Jung Hyun Ah who watched their concert, remembered:

It was not pretty. Performers should be pretty as performers, but their clothing and their belly were more "seen" than their performance. I couldn't concentrate on their performance, but paid more attention to their bodies. (Lee Hana 4/26/12)

Regarding this response, Gong Bitna suspected that there might have been an impression that "we wore those kinds of clothing in order to hide our skill"; she had always thought that way about other women's drumming groups wearing similar clothing. Lee Hana thought that Rhyta did not need that kind of clothing; since the music of Rhyta was much more skillful than other women's groups, she could not understand why Rhyta chose that strategy.

Jeong Wonyeong, a former member of Dongcheon and the leader of DoDo, stated that Dongcheon pursued "femininity" to some degree, even if not as explicitly as DoDo. This might be related to the fact that some of the first members had previously been members of commercially successful drumming groups, and thus they might have known how to "sell it."

The following quote comes from a journalist's review of Dongcheon's performance:

Dongcheon, who presented the repertoire of "Nanani taryeong," "Sulbi sori," and "E-eo-do sana" on this day, was sexier than Marilyn Monroe and cuter than Cyndi Lauper... (Kim Gyeongwon 2005)<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Kim, Gyeongwon. 2005. "Taakgwa rideumi gwantonghaneun yeoljeong-ui soriyeohaeng [Sound Travel into Enthusiasm of Percussion and Rhythm]." *Saram Ilbo* (December 31, 2005), available at

As the review illustrates, the women performers of Dongcheon were seen as presenting “femininity” and emphasizing a “sexual image,” which appealed to the audience.

DoDo wore skirts in the modern *hanbok* style during performance, which was rare for women drummers. Why they started wearing skirts goes back to when Dongcheon was invited to tour in Europe by the master Park Byeongcheon, designated as Important Intangible Cultural Heritage “Jindo *ssitgimgut*” (a kind of southwestern shamanic ritual) in 1998. He commented on Dongcheon’s performance, “Why do women wear clothes like men? Women should dress like women.” After that, Dongcheon, following his advice, had worn skirts; Jeong Wonyeong found that wearing skirts looked much prettier.



**Figure IV-9:** DoDo’s performance © DoDo

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<http://hanbitkorea.com/technote7/board.php?board=freeboard&page=2&command=body&no=2139>, accessed on August 28, 2012.



According to Jeong Wonyeong, who emphasized the visual aspects of performance as a tool to gain popularity, the group often received negative comments regarding their sleeveless, strapless clothing, even from those in the same field. She was very upset when one senior male drummer remarked, “Why don’t they concentrate on music?”:

We wear fewer clothes than others, but we do care for music. He is also a member of a drumming group. I don’t think that his music is far better than ours. But people seem to think that way from the fact that we are “semi-dressed.” Nevertheless, I do not care about that point of view. I believe that they will know eventually that we do not disregard music. (Jeong Wonyeong 11/11/11)

Clothing baring the upper chest seems to be common among female fusion *gugak* ensembles. These groups, considered popular music, frequently wear modified *hanbok* baring their shoulders and décolletage, through which they may promote themselves as sexualized objects reminiscent of *gisaeng* (Kim Jungwon 2012). Howard (2011) claims that “too much of *gugak* fusion is about being pretty and sexy”; these groups seem to employ the same visual strategies used by K-pop girl groups.

As illustrated in the examples of Rhyta and DoDo, the articulation of “female sexuality” through clothing is commonly connected to the devaluation of their musical skill.<sup>90</sup> Their peers often expressed concern that women’s groups who presented their “femininity/sexuality” for easier commercialization might not consider music as a first priority; nonetheless they acknowledged that “sexiness” could be effective when added to a base of solid musical technique. Yu Kyung-Hwa, who invoked the saying that *gwangdae* (*pansori* singers, or entertainers in general) should be good-looking, said that visual appearance cannot be

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<sup>90</sup> Women’s music is often devalued in a male-dominated musical realm, “as a way of maintaining male control over the established social-sexual order” (Waxer 2001: 232); for example, Cali, Colombia’s all-women salsa groups “sounded bad” (ibid.) and women’s groups in Balinese gamelan are “considered inferior in technique, dynamic range, and speed” (Downing 2010: 55).

disregarded in entertainment; she noted that some K-pop girl groups have presented excellent music and dance as well as visual sex appeal.

“Lookism,” which means “prejudice or discrimination on the grounds of appearance” according to the Oxford English Dictionary, is applicable to most areas of Korean society. Indeed, women’s “obsession” with physical appearance is not simply a matter of personal satisfaction, but a social tool and a social expectation (Chung Jae-Chorl: 2007). Working within the confines of social expectations for appearance is necessary for women to survive in a highly competitive social structure (ibid.). Furthermore, compared to other societies, Korean society does not offer enough routes for women to exhibit their capabilities other than their “body” (Lim In-Sook 2002). When “women who fit the beauty norm are more apt to succeed in work and marriage,” altering one’s body or having plastic surgery becomes “necessary rather than an option” (Kim Taeyeon 2003). Indeed, some women drummers recalled that college professors would tell them to lose weight and suggest that *pansori* majors get plastic surgery before pursuing stage careers. Cho Jin-Young, the organizer of a traditional performing arts institute affiliated with the government, observed that “femininity” in the drumming field was less of a concern than with dancers and vocal performers. Nevertheless, he knew of a few mixed-gender drumming groups who hired female members based on their height and appearance, and made them wear clothing that emphasized their figures.

More recently, men have been paying attention to appearance in the same manner. Since the success of the Korean pop singer and dancer Rain, whose “cute” face and “muscular” body appealed to women in the early 2000s, men’s bodies have become a form of capital and a commodity in Korean popular culture, and Korean men are increasingly expected to attend to their appearance (Yoon Joe Won: 2010). However, even this trend is usually pursued more by

choice than as a necessary measure for success. This different standard for men and women is clear when it is noted that only a few male drummers in men's and mixed-gender groups explore their "masculinity" in relation to their bodies, while most of the women's groups are concerned with looking "feminine" and appealing. Even in clothing choices, there is a persistent double standard: popular message boards frequently label women entertainers who bring attention to their appearance as "selling their sexuality," while men who bare their torsos are celebrated for doing so.

## **Conclusion**

Foucault has argued that "resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" (1978: 95). Women's drumming groups' strategies of emphasizing "femininity" and/or sexuality may be seen as resisting the dominant styles that a majority of drumming groups perform. Equally, however, such resistance both reveals the "dominant masculinity" in the drumming field and exposes how that masculinity influences them in the way they engage with what looks "feminine." The "feminine" qualities that they pursue—e.g. sentimentality, an emphasis on beauty, and sexualized clothing—seem to be a kind of essentialized form of "femininity" as represented in contemporary media, where women are commodified and objectified for the "interests and desires of men" (Connell 1987). Such reinforcement of "femininity" may be interpreted as "accommodation," in that it conforms to a male-centered gender ideology. As Leblanc has argued, "[r]esisters, after all, remain within the social system they contest" (1991: 17; quoted in Hollander & Einwohner 2004: 549). In this way, while women drummers who pursue "feminization" strategies are attempting to attain success on their own terms and create a new, independent aesthetic, by default their ways of doing so will

typically conform to at least some social expectations of women, and therefore reinforce the very power they are acting to resist.

## Chapter V. Women Drummers: Portraits and Concerns

Koreans today, regardless of age, gender, educational background, or social status, pursue drumming in many different institutions and spaces. For professional women drummers, however, their professional status heavily impacts the difficulties they encounter; many issues they face are unlikely to apply to amateur women drummers. Even though women and men study drumming in equal ratio, women performing on stage remain marginalized and less represented. Some female students give up pursuing *pansori gobeop* (drumming as accompaniment in *pansori*) because it is so strongly constructed as male; other female students feel discriminated against when they are not recruited for performing compared to their male colleagues. They are often discouraged by the fact that women tend to stop their performance activities after marriage or childbirth, leaving few models to look up to.

This chapter draws on the experiences of women performers in the professional drumming field, beginning with portraits of three women drummers—Park Eunha, Shin Heeyeon, and Oh Hyun-ju—and then discussing the experiences and concerns shared among the many women drummers I interviewed. Each of the three drummers is introduced through a brief biography in the first section, providing an overview of how the women were drawn to drumming, what kind of experiences and difficulties they have gone through, and what they have done to survive in the field. I further discuss each one's noteworthy experiences in and conceptions of drumming: the internalization of *eum* and *yang* in a musical context, the effect of marriage and childbirth on a performance career, and concerns about being a “woman drummer” in a male-dominated performing field.

These three drummers cannot represent the range of generations, backgrounds, experiences, and conceptions among all Korean women drummers. However, while I interacted

with more than thirty women drummers over the course of this research in 2008, 2010, and 2011, these three women impressed and intrigued me with their “hardworking” style of drumming. My initial idea was to concentrate on five women drummers who were active in the performing field as primary collaborators. When I returned to Korea in the spring of 2011 for a longer period of field research, I found that three of these women were no longer active performers. One had just quit the two drumming groups she had been engaged in; another was preparing for pregnancy; a third was going to India for six months to learn the classical *tala* (rhythmic) system and collaborate with an Indian master drummer. Although I was very frustrated with the unexpected situation, I realized that it represents the reality of professional performance, especially in the case of the women who drop performance to build a new family. Therefore, I retained Shin Heeyeon’s story, along with two of the still-active performers. The situation of the woman who has ceased performing highlight the difficulties women encounter in professional drumming; the last section of this chapter therefore delves into barriers that professional women drummers often encounter because of the normalization of the exclusion of women, marriage and children, and prejudice towards women entertainers.

### **Portraits of Three Women Drummers**

#### **Park Eunha**

Park Eunha (b. 1959)<sup>91</sup> has worked for the National Gugak Center (Gungnip gugakwon; often called simply Gugakwon) located in Seoul—the only woman in the *samulnori* group—and

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<sup>91</sup> I first knew Park Eunha as a teacher, as I took her drum class at Gugakwon in 2001; I first interviewed her for my study in 2008. We met several times throughout 2011; I usually visited Gugakwon to observe her performances and the *samulnori* team’s rehearsals, followed by interviews or brief conversations.

has performed and taught as a drummer and dancer in many contexts.<sup>92</sup> According to her, she was “naturally guided” to drumming, and the performing arts in general, in her childhood, even when “she was in her mother’s womb.” The question of why she drums, for her, is almost the same as that of why she was born. Her mother had many artistic talents—singing, dancing, and drumming—although Park Eunha remembered that her mother displayed these talents only within the house or in front of her friends. Her father brought Park Eunha to shamanic rituals and *pungmul* performances; he was proud of her when she imitated them. Therefore, her engagement with drumming was possible because of her parents—the artistic talent from her mother and the support from her father.

When she was in third grade, Park Eunha learned the basics of Korean drumming—*janggu*, *soe*, and *sangmo nori*, from master *pungmul* players Yang Doil and Song Sungap—as well as a variety of dance repertoires at a private music and dance school. When she was in her third year in middle school, she began building her performance career by being recruited as a member of the Little Angels, made up of talented children and teens who intended to cultivate their performing skills, especially in music and dance; she performed in more than twenty countries outside Korea with the Little Angels performing group. In 1977, in high school, she performed *seoljanggu* at a folk dance competition; she not only received a prize but was also offered admission to college with financial support by an evaluation committee member who was fascinated by her performance. She majored in dance at Sejong University and continued in an MA program; in both cases, she chose dance because there was no major in drumming at the time.

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<sup>92</sup> The Gugakwon *samulnori* team was made of four members in 1984 when she joined it, and as of 2014 had thirteen members.

After graduating from the master's program, Park Eunha joined the Gugakwon *samulnori* team in 1984 through open recruitment. When she performed the *samulnori* repertoire, she played mostly the *jing* and *jjaksoe* (duet *soe*), both in standing and sitting position. A senior member of the team as of 2011, she was not regularly involved in team performances; however, she sometimes played percussion for the Gugakwon folk music and dance performances, and performed *samulnori* with other senior members for a special Gugakwon event. For example, in August 2011, Park Eunha played *jing* as an accompanist with the Gugakwon folk music ensemble for *salpuri* (a dance repertoire derived from shaman ritual) performance, on one of the Gugakwon Saturday performance series. In September 2011, she performed a *samulnori* repertoire with three other senior members in sitting position at the "Korean Traditional Performing Art Festival," in which the Gugakwon *samulnori* team featuring guest performers presented drumming repertoire from the southeastern region on the outdoor stage of Gugakwon.

Park Eunha has taken advantage of many performance opportunities outside Gugakwon as well, whether as a drummer or a dancer. She has presented her own concerts ten times between 1991 and 2014.<sup>93</sup> In addition to performance activities, she has also pursued academic and teaching careers, obtaining a Ph.D. in dance in 2003 and publishing a book from her dissertation on *seoljanggu*. She has taught drum and dance classes at Gugakwon as well as colleges and cultural centers, and taught drumming class for foreigners at the Academy of Korean Studies during 1995-1999 and at Gugakwon during 1999-2005; she was particularly passionate about the classes for foreigners, because she liked not only teaching, but also learning English through interacting with English speakers. Since 1999 she has taught and presented

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<sup>93</sup> She had her first concert in 1991 with the title of "Park Eunha's *Seoljanggu* and Impromptu Dance"; she performed "*soechum* (dance with *soe*)," "impromptu dance," "*sinawi*," "*seoljanggu*," and "*samul* and *sinawi*."



drumming at universities and government-associated institutions in the United States, Poland, and India. As of 2011, she was mostly teaching at colleges. She was interested in “genteelly teaching students at colleges by taking care of their artistic talent with what I have” (10/07/11).

She continued:

I would like to teach particularly how to express “Koreanness” by demonstrating how I have done it so far. I think technique is rather simple to teach. Instead, as an Asian woman artist, with motherly caring, I would like to make [students] rooted in “Koreanness,” help them to express it, and lead them to perform it whether in Korea or abroad. (10/7/11)



**Figure V-1:** Park Eunha, dancing with *soe* © Segye ilbo

Because she had a stable job at a government institute, obtained a Ph.D., and built a performance career not only with the *samulnori* team of Gugakwon but also by herself, Park Eunha is considered one of the most successful women drummers in the field. On people’s

perception of her success, she demured, not thinking that she “succeeded” or was simply “fortunate.” Rather, she evaluated herself as “strong” and “hardworking”:

I think [“success”] came to me naturally. I stand neutral. I did not try to press others; I came here by doing what I was doing. It was not too fast, or too slow. Through a lot of difficulties, I was able to go forward to the next step with maturity. I stand inside myself... Whether someone criticizes me or not, whether my body helps or not, I never thought that I don’t want to do it. I am always energized once I stand on stage. (6/21/11)

Through such statements, Park Eunha acknowledged that she experienced some criticism and difficulties. She emphasized that she “worked hard simply because I was so engaged in my hardworking mode, without the intention of disrespecting and defeating others.” She believed that the differences in background, education, personality, and gender caused an “invisible tension” between her and her colleagues.<sup>94</sup> Overall, she perceived the issues that she encountered as derived primarily from her background, of which she considered gender a small part.

Nevertheless, Park Eunha also reflected that the lack of frequent communication and interaction with her teammates resulted in misunderstandings, and that these issues with communication and interaction were influenced in part by the gender dynamics at play. Park Eunha was the youngest child in her family, and had many older brothers. Because she was accustomed to being around groups of men both within the family and in a performance environment, she used to consider men primarily in terms of “brother” and “father.” However, the “macho” and “authoritarian” remarks and behaviors of male colleagues seemed to be hard for her to manage. One of her male colleagues admitted that the environment of the Gugakwon *samulnori* team was dominated by men’s “*gi*” (“overpowering energy” in this context). When she had problems with male colleagues, she told me, she tended to suppress them within herself,

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<sup>94</sup> Many of her male colleagues had strictly performance-based careers.

rather than confronting them outright: “I can’t even confront men.”<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, she has always used honorifics when talking with men, even if they were younger than her. Along the same lines, she could not stand women who behaved badly—in a disrespectful way—to men.

I think women need to embrace men. Why do women have a womb? Women have an embracing character, while men have an attacking one. Of course, women need to talk equally in a theoretical sense, but I think women should not press or behave badly to men in daily life. I don’t think those women can do music well. Music that embraces others will work. I believe that women who forgive and restrain themselves will eventually defeat men. So I, embodying these [qualities], can’t quarrel with men. (6/21/11)

This attitude toward men was influenced by her mother, who never talked back to her father. She learned that women should not act upfront.<sup>96</sup> Furthermore, when Park Eunha’s students visited her, her mother always used the “hao-che,” or honorific endings. The way that her mother treated her father, brothers, and others strongly impressed Park Eunha; among other things, she would not talk down to her students.

The gender conceptions and practices of her mother are also manifested in Park Eunha’s conception of music performance:

We cannot compare men’s and women’s performance because each has a different energy source in playing. Like *eum* and *yang*, there is a difference in the physical configuration of female and male bodies. Likewise, women cannot beat men in explosively “striking” technique, whereas men cannot beat women in “tightening” technique... There is no aesthetical taste in Korean drumming if someone just strikes without tightening. (7/2/08)

Park Eunha explained further that the concept of “tightening” references sexual intercourse between men and women; “women typically play percussion in such a way that the sound lasts even though it is soft and slow, whereas men’s sound drops quickly.” More generally, she said

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<sup>95</sup> She emphasized that she would not argue or quarrel with them; she confessed that she had once tried, but it did not work because she ended up crying while talking.

<sup>96</sup> She emphasized that her father did not disrespect her mother, and was devoted to her.

that she believed that music, like life and nature, is “the balance of *eum* and *yang*.” For instance, she emphasized that there should be a balance between weak and strong sounds: only playing strongly is not enough (6/21/11). Likewise, her view of the *jing*—usually considered a less difficult instrument—derives from her ideas of balance: “The *jing* plays an important role in making other instruments return to the ‘right’ beat after improvisation and it also functions somewhat as a “feminine” character in the ensemble by embracing [other rhythmic phrases] warmly.” Her interpretation of the *jing* as “embracing” and “warm” suggests that she has internalized gender roles based on Confucian ideology: men are supposed to be “authoritative, dominant, strong, independent, and intelligent,” and women “obedient, quiet, dependent, passive, warm and wise” (Lee Joo-Yeon 2004: 29).

Park Eunha’s conception of *eum* and *yang* is manifested in her treatment of *soe*. As discussed in Chapter III, she believed that metal instruments are hard for women to deal with and thus a woman who played *soe* needs strong energy. She usually plays *soe* after warming up with *janggu* or *buk* because it takes time to control *soe*. She has to hold it to her chest for a while before playing it, especially during the winter when the thin metal of the *soe* might be broken or have a bad—not soft—sound, “as if it exchanges the energy of *eum* and *yang*, regardless of identifying which is *eum* and which is *yang*.” She believed that metal instruments, especially *soe*, are influenced by “invisible energy.” She also supported her assertion that *soe* is a difficult instrument for women through recounting her experience of working with Kim Yongbae, one of the pioneers of *samulnori* and a legendary *soe* player:

Once before, when we were playing *jjaksoe* for a video recording, Kim Yongbae told me that playing *soe* is difficult for both men and women...He mentioned that women who play *jjaksoe* with a [male] *soe* player would be very special. (10/7/11)

This conversation suggests that Kim Yongbae admired Park Eunha in that she was able to perform *soe* and even *jjaksoe* with him, and that Park Eunha took pride in that admiration. Yet even though neither specified that *soe* has the energy of *yang*, they implied that *soe* was too hard for women to play. Therefore, Park Eunha has developed a gendered way of dealing with *soe*, e.g. embracing the *soe* in her chest before playing it.

### **Shin Heeyeon**

Shin Heeyeon (b. 1980),<sup>97</sup> who leads the *yeonhui* group Taedong, began performing with talchum through club activity in high school, during which she also briefly learned *pungmul*. When she was in her third year of high school, she decided to major in *yeonhui* and took some drumming lessons. She entered the Korean National University of Arts (Hanyejong), majoring in *yeonhui* and concentrating on talchum. However, one year later, she switched to a concentration in *pungmul*. She described the attraction of drumming as a “drug”:

I found [drumming] more attractive as I played. I don’t remember exactly when and why I liked it first, but even though I started late, I was almost crazy about it, to the extent of practicing from 7 am until 2-3 am. I just like to stand on stage, without knowing why.  
(7/23/10)

Because Shin Heeyeon was good at drumming generally but not *seonban*, she realized that she was not at the level of her fellow students. She was told that she would not be able to master *seonban* as a talchum major and a small woman, and she often observed students who were discouraged by excellent classmates and gave up their study. Nonetheless, she practiced constantly at school because she did not want others to see her fail.

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<sup>97</sup> Won Il recommended that I interview Shin Heeyeon, in 2010. I met her for a few interviews in 2010 and 2011 at her group’s practice room, located in eastern Seoul. I was not able to observe her performances or classes as many times as I wished, because she largely stopped performing while pregnant.

In 2002 Shin Heeyeon formed the female *samulnori* group Taedong, made up of female *yeonhui* majors from Hanyejong, to prove that women could perform *samulnori* as well as men could. Through three years of hard training, her group was acknowledged in the field and eventually scouted by a prominent *samulnori* group, with whom they worked for one year. She is still leading Taedong, now a mixed-gender group, with the help of her husband, also a drummer and the group's art director. She has also given drumming lessons to students preparing for college entrance exams and has performed as an accompanying drummer.

Shin Heeyeon reflected that what she has been doing is not easy for her. She shared how much physical and mental energy is required for her to perform, even to prepare:

I am usually wiped out after the performance. I use all my energy and put all my spirit into it. I get really sick afterwards; sometimes I go to the emergency room. I can't eat food well for two weeks before a bigger performance is coming up; I'm so sensitive and tend to torture myself. (9/5/11)

She also shared with me that she moved her body more wildly and was more engaged in performance than others, to the extent that she lost her mind. She was "wiped out" but also felt "accomplished" and "happy." She emphasized that she had to practice more than others so that she could feel free to perform on stage. Furthermore, her strong will for "perfection" was partly derived from the "inferiority complex" she had regarding men prior to her marriage. Thinking that "I can do better than men," she made herself practice two or three times more than men did (7/23/10). She had to maintain a strong mind to compete with men and compensate for what she perceived as her weak body:

I feel [energy in women] can emerge after practicing for three to four years and building up *gongnyeok*. I heard that we play like men but we are strong and at the same time soft as women. As it takes a long time for a diamond to be born, I think it would take a long time and much pain for us to become a diamond. Men could get there easily, but they can't beat us in terms of depth and sophistication. (7/23/10)

Shin Heeyeon believes that women drummers can be superior to men in that they can be not only as strong as men but also present “sophistication” and “femaleness.” Indeed, as her husband Yang Jaechun asserted, “even if Shin Heeyeon is a woman, her *janggu* sound is bigger, faster, and more powerful than mine. It is because she has *gongnyeok*” (5/7/11).

Shin Heeyeon practiced playing *janggu* with *sangmo* thirty minutes to one hour every day, believing that “performing only during the performance is not a professional attitude” (9/5/11). She was positive that she would be able to perform *pangut* until she is in her forties or fifties if she takes care of her body, although she knew that it would be hard. She admired Yoo Jihwa (b. 1943), who could still perform as well as younger drummers, and considered her a role model, as she was charismatic enough to lead a *pungmul* group. She aimed to continue her career as long as she could practice, enjoy herself, and improve. She acknowledged that this may not work, hinting that she may not stick with performing *pungmul* if circumstances change:

Reflecting on my practice days, I had so much hardship from it. I practiced every day. So, I know it will be hard. I don’t think I have enjoyed performing it. I may change what I’m thinking now. But, above all, making that physical body ready to perform would be the most difficult since performance is not simply “play.” To be able to perform one *jaban dwijipgi*, I need to practice it at least five times continuously. So, I imagine how much I would get sick afterward. (9/5/11)

Even though Shin Heeyeon invested a lot of energy and time in *pungmul*, she was not completely satisfied when performing. Instead, she felt more satisfied when she performed drumming within “music”<sup>98</sup>:

I performed with the music ensemble that does not concentrate on drumming performance last year. I felt something missing when I did only drumming, but during this performance I found it a lot of fun and less hard. Also, there were various responses from the audience. Whereas I usually have the audience saying “you are great!” by touching my arms in drumming performances, I heard that “the performance was great!” in this performance. (5/7/11)

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<sup>98</sup> Shin Heeyeon uses the word “music” to indicate music dominated by melodic instruments or melody, as opposed to music only with percussion instruments. This reflects a general devaluation of non-melodic music.

Shin Heeyeon recalled how much this thrilled her. She believed that “being powerful through the experience of *pungmul* performance can be doubled when it is transferred to music, and thus the audience likes it” (5/7/11). She wished to “do some performing arts that are more high quality and artistic, rather than appealing to the masses”; however, she did not intend to perform solely for her own enjoyment, but believed that good art should be loved by the masses. She intended to “work in forms that others cannot perform easily.” Approaching drumming from the perspective of musicality, she referenced “music,” “*gugak*,” and “arts,” as opposed to “drumming.” She was preparing for this by taking piano lessons.

When I was in Korea for field research in 2011, Shin Heeyeon was preparing for pregnancy, and then pregnant; during this time her performance activity was almost nonexistent. I was able to see changes in her thoughts on the relationship between pregnancy and childbirth and her performance activity through meetings with her throughout the process of pregnancy. In 2010, when I met her for the first time, she had a lot of stress regarding childbirth, because it would affect her performance career:

If I have a baby, I have to take one or two years off. Then, I’m afraid that there will be no place for me when I come back and my body will be stiff. I’ve seen some famous ballerinas managing their body for performance even as they get older. But, I’m afraid it will not be easy to do it, especially because of childbirth and childcare...When I was younger, I was okay after practicing five to six hours continuously, but now when I’m sick, it takes a week to recover. (7/23/10)

Shin Heeyeon thought she could still perform after having a child, but she was afraid that she might not be able to perform as much as before, and thus would lose her position in the field. Concerned about the future, she was considering learning something that she would be able to do after having children. These concerns were based on her observation that women drummers did not stay in the field after having children.



When I saw her in May 2011, Shin Heeyeon was preparing to become pregnant, by taking a break from her physically intense performance activities and trying to gain weight. She had a different take on having a baby:

I feel now that I should not be afraid of losing something as a result of having a baby, but instead I will learn something new from having it. (5/7/11)

Her attitude towards having children was positive, and entailed an ambitious plan: she would perform while pregnant until nearly due, and return to performing as soon as possible after it.

Once she got pregnant, however, Shin Heeyeon stopped performing almost completely. Since she usually spent all of her physical and mental energy preparing for performance, she and her husband agreed that it was not a good idea to perform during the pregnancy. She was even worried about playing *janggu* as accompaniment, despite the relative ease of that job compared to *seonban*. She shared with me how she felt about being pregnant:

I think I can't perform if my body is in trouble; I cancelled this morning's class because of bad morning sickness. I hardly practice, but I can manage to give a lesson to one new student once in a while...

After being pregnant, I found my body does not help me. Last time I taught, I felt tired. I think it is because I haven't used my body for a while. After giving birth, I might need to take care of a baby and thus I should be selective with what to perform. (9/5/11)

Realizing that her physical condition during pregnancy was not optimal for performing or teaching, Shin Heeyeon seemed to become less confident about returning to performance. Based on her belief that the best performance could derive from a substantial amount of practice and body conditioning, she was not sure if she could impress audiences with a weaker body. She emphasized that "if I can't control my body, then I wouldn't perform" (9/5/11).

Nevertheless, when Taedong was hired to perform *samulnori* and other drumming repertoire, she decided to train her students to perform and invited guest performers. Unexpectedly, she became a *janggu* accompanist for a dance performance in that concert:

On the day of the performance, I really wanted to perform. I felt there was some lack in [the students'] performance and I could do better than them. At the same time, I envied them and my body was eager for performing. Then, surprisingly, I happened to play *janggu* as an accompaniment for dance performance, which is not that hard at all. I was very careful and did not play strong, but still I felt some ache in my belly. I was exhausted after performing, and thus I couldn't play when I heard the encore from the audience. (9/5/11)



**Figure V-2:** Shin Heeyeon (seated), playing *janggu* for Jindo drum dance

The last time I met her, in November 2011, Shin Heeyeon had three months left of pregnancy. She felt better physically because her morning sickness was over, although she had a terrible headache from the flu and could not take medicine for it.

I thought my performance activity would be over once I carried a baby. But I have played drums even in a limited repertoire. I think that I drew a line and thus I thought I could not perform when I'm pregnant. Since I'm still involved in teaching, I don't think I'm completely away from practicing. I'm not sure about after giving birth, though. I hope to perform again one year after childbirth. (11/2/11)

Having gained confidence from performing even in a limited context, Shin Heeyeon was once again more positive about pursuing performance activities after childbirth. She implied that she might have one more child, yet would continue performance activities with the group. She believed that this would be possible in part because she had an older sister who was willing to help to take care of her children.

### Oh Hyun-ju

Oh Hyun-ju (b.1982)<sup>99</sup> is the only female drummer in the drumming group Noreum Machi. When she was in elementary school, she loved listening to Western popular music, mostly R&B, and the Korean popular music genre *teuroteu*.<sup>100</sup> In middle school she joined a band that played rock and metal, for which she learned to play with a drum set. She was first exposed to, and fascinated by, *pungmul* performance in her second year in middle school. Fortunately, her school started offering *pungmul* classes, taught by a private amateur *pungmul* group, once a week. Later, when she watched *samulnori* performances, she decided to learn how to play with *sangmo*. When she was in her second year of high school, she decided to major in drumming at college, and began taking lessons from professional drummers, including Kim Ju Hong, the current leader of Noreum Machi. Because her father's business had failed, her family was in financial difficulties, and her father, who had a negative prejudice against "entertainers,"

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<sup>99</sup> I had obtained contact information for Oh Hyun-ju after seeing her perform in New York in 2009. I interviewed her a few times in 2010 and 2011; I sometimes met her near concert halls and sometimes at her group's practice room, located in Hongdae area, Seoul. Since she spent much time touring abroad, I was not able to see her as often I wished.

<sup>100</sup> Teuroteu, a word derived from "fox trot," is influenced by the pentatonic scales and duple meter of Japanese enka during the Japanese colonial period ("Korea," in *Oxford Music Online*, available at <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/45812?q=t%27%C5%ADrot%27%C5%AD&search=quick&pos=2&start=1#firsthit>, access in April 2014).

objected to her plans; however, her mother partially supported her without letting her father know, and she worked in part-time jobs to pay for lessons.

In 2001 Oh Hyun-ju entered Hanyejong with a *yeonhui* major; finally, her father acknowledged her efforts and began to support her. She mostly stayed at school to practice, sometimes staying overnight to save commuting time. However, overwhelmed by the tight curriculum, she took one year off; during her leave, she became reinvested in performing on stage.

Right after graduating in 2006, Oh Hyun-ju joined Noreum Machi. She felt that she had come to know them like family in her years studying and working with their members. As of 2011, she was in the middle of the group in terms of age and experience; there were three main members—herself and two seniors— and one associate member, as well as two guest performers who were junior to her. Oh Hyun-ju usually played *jing* and *jjaksoe* in *samulnori* repertoire, but has played other percussion instruments in other repertoires. However, she shared with me that her favorite instrument is *buk*, partly because “its resonance remains in her heart,” partly because *buk* plays a role in building a base for *jangu*’s rhythmic variations (7/16/10). When there was a concert coming up, the team practiced together almost every day. As for her own practice, she usually worked with a melodic instrument in the morning and percussion in the afternoon. She emphasized that members of Noreum Machi should be able to play both drums and melodic instruments, influenced by the leader’s skill in singing and playing many melodic and percussion instruments.



**Figure V-3:** Oh Hyun-ju (left), playing *jjaksoe* with Noreum Machi members © Noreum Machi

When I met her first in 2010, Oh Hyun-ju shared her difficulties in working with the group. The youngest member at the time, she had to not only practice but do all the paperwork because they did not then have staff members in accounting or marketing. She enjoyed it, but at the same time felt overwhelmed. In 2010 she confessed that the other members—all men—did not take into consideration that she is a woman:

We tend to carry luggage equally. Since I'm the only one who has a driver's license, I have to drive a car to go to concert venues...

It takes more time for me to put on traditional *hanbok* by myself as well as putting on make-up. But the members don't wait for me...(7/16/10)

Her perception of this situation had changed when I saw her in 2011. She had her junior members who were likely to take care of luggage, and who took over some driving. In addition, they had more female members in Noreum Machi: one female guest member who played wind instruments, and three female administrative staff members. She confessed that having more male members might be better in terms of carrying baggage and such, but perhaps most notable

was how the increase in female members had changed the group dynamics in such a way that men began to complain:

The atmosphere might be better if there are more women, but at the same time it is said that men have difficulty when women get easily sensitive during their period. When I was the only woman in the team, I used to complain about men, but now the circumstances have reversed. (5/27/11)

Oh Hyun-ju admitted that she is not an easy person to deal and negotiate with, implying that other members might have had a hard time because of her character. For example, she did not move on if she was not satisfied with a certain step, whether in rehearsals or while discussing the budget. She believed that her character resembled those of her grandmother and aunt, born on Jeju Island. It is said that women of Jeju Island are usually strong-minded; according to Oh Hyun-ju, “Jeju Island used to be a place of exile/banishment for *yangban* (aristocrats) who betrayed kingdoms, and thus wives of *yangban* who came to Jeju Island could not help but become strong to support their husbands or make a living for them” (5/27/11). She believed that the following generations of women typically retained that character.

Oh Hyun-ju had been worried about being the only female member in the group in the context of performance. She sometimes got compliments; she once heard from a peer that “it could not have tasted like this if there were all men or all women” (7/16/10). She did not want to hear that “she is not as powerful as men.” She had worked hard to perform as well as other members, and had found that her skills have improved. Her pride was hurt when she watched videos of herself and saw where she made mistakes or struggled during the performance; she confessed that she could not sleep well on those nights. Nonetheless, she believed that “hurting her pride” might help improve her skill by motivating her.

Oh Hyun-ju shared an episode from her college years with me. When some *yeonhui* majors were recruited to perform outside school, she was the only woman on the first list; she

was replaced by someone else, with the reasoning that she was too short compared to the men selected. She suspected that she might have not been replaced if she were a man or “prettier,” and was very upset and hurt by the fact that she was evaluated by her appearance, not by her skill.

This was in line with what she often heard from teachers: the “traditional” conception that entertainers should be good-looking. For her, it was contradictory that the requirement of “good-looking” applied only to women, not men. This motivated her to become “stronger” and work much harder. She confessed that “I gave up appealing to the audience with my appearance, since I am not pretty or slender,” but “I tend to put on heavy make-up” (5/27/11). Nevertheless, she emphasized that “being myself” was important. She believed that musical skill should be the most important qualification and an attractive face should be a bonus. She seemed to be encouraged by the leader of Noreum Machi, who said “you look pretty once you can play well.” She also felt good performing on international stages, where she was evaluated more by her performance (5/27/11).

As a member of Noreum Machi, Oh Hyun-ju was concerned about her group’s position in the field; the group was preparing for their second album at the time and thinking about the direction of the group in the future. At the same time, she was thinking about her own career. As she got more experience, she realized the importance of melodic components as a drummer; she was stimulated by other members in the group who were capable of playing both percussion and melodic instruments. The international tour on which she observed performers playing percussion as well as melodic instruments made her feel that she should do both, so she was learning a wind instrument—to “break the image as the percussionist Oh Hyun-ju and create one as the musician Oh Hyun-ju who can sing, drum, and dance” (10/27/11). As for what kind of

artist she ideally wanted to be, she mentioned Kim Ju Hong and Yoo Sunja, the senior woman drummer who used to be a member of *yeoseong nongakdan*; both were capable of singing, playing melodic instruments, and playing drums. She had been putting a lot of effort not only into developing herself as a performer but also into improving her English skills, another result of her international tour experience. She had been studying English through private lessons by phone or taking classes at English academies so as to hear the feedback directly from the foreign audience, and to communicate directly with those who collaborate with her group (10/27/11).

When Oh Hyun-ju had confronted difficulties and struggles, she had asked herself, “Shall I quit my career?” but she considered that unlikely:

It has been fifteen years that I have had this career and as I turn 30 years old, it is half of my life. I’m already in this field that I can’t get away from. “Oh Hyun-ju is a percussionist.” I had a conversation with a female senior drummer who quit this career. She said that I’m the only woman who is still performing after graduating, as opposed to other classmates who got married. When I heard that, I was encouraged, but at the same time I feel lonely. (10/27/11)

Conscious that women rarely survived in performing fields as they age, Oh Hyun-ju had a sense of pressure to succeed while she was still young. She knew three women, out of fifteen classmates in college, who were once very passionate but disappeared from the field as they reached their late twenties and thirties:

There were two who were active in the field of performing among the senior women: one is two years older than me, married, but her performance activity seems to have decreased after marriage; the other used to perform a lot but did not perform any more after marriage. Among juniors, there are some who still perform, because they are young. However, as they reach their late twenties, they do other jobs, like selling cosmetics, selling insurance, and working in an office. (10/27/11)

Her close acquaintances either got married or focused on giving lessons, or did not pursue performance activities. From the performer’s perspective, she had a rather negative opinion of teaching. She did not think that someone who taught could really be a performer:



Someone performing on stage as a full time job can be considered a professional performer. I understand why they do part-time jobs, to make a living. Right after I graduated from college, I had a hard time making money even for the rent, but I did not perform at opening events of a supermarket...If you decide to be a performer, then you should have pride. If you do music-making, then you should fight for it. (10/27/11)

This is why Oh Hyun-ju objected to the system of *gugak gangsa pulje* (pool system for instructors of traditional music); she doubted that a performer could have time to practice while teaching in several schools a week. Without practice, the performance quality could not be guaranteed, which would be “rude to the audience.”

Oh Hyun-ju wished to be a good role model for women who would pursue careers in performing. She wanted to encourage them by showing that “someone is working hard and still surviving in the field” (7/16/10). Furthermore, she aimed to be someone junior women drummers could look at and think “I want to be like her,” or even “I shouldn’t be like her” when they see her performance (7/16/10). She also wanted to give juniors advice from a female perspective, which she had never had access to.

### **On Being Women Drummers**

The experiences of these three women, despite their varying ages and backgrounds, reveal a set of similar themes. They have all experienced specifically gendered difficulties within the drumming field: Park Eunha had communication problems with male colleagues in her *samulnori* team due to different career paths; Shin Heeyeon had doubts related to her ability to perform due to pregnancy and childbirth; Oh Hyun-ju was initially removed from a performer’s list because she was “small” compared to men. They have all worked hard to overcome such difficulties and challenge barriers facing women: to sustain her career, Park Eunha pursued dancing as well as a graduate degree, while Shin Heeyeon and Oh Hyun-ju have

been developing their approach to drumming beyond performance to encompass broader artistic philosophies. The stories of the gendered difficulties these women have encountered are echoed by the experiences of many other women drummers I interviewed. The issues these women raise stem from the normalization of the exclusion of women—a lack of certain opportunities at colleges and male-dominated workplaces—as well as marriage and children, and prejudice towards women performers. These, in turn, arise from broader scales of inequality, based on conceptions of the traditional place of women in society and biases regarding women’s physicality.

Oh Hyun-ju’s experience at college—not recruited for drum performance opportunities seemingly because of her femaleness—was very common among women drummers. Yim Mijoung (b.1981), a former member of Rhyta, found that performance recruitment “felt unfair” at college, when male students were typically chosen regardless of ability (7/11/08). Female students, including Kim Yeong-eun (b.1986) of Noriggot, observed the trend that male students, even those not so skilled, got performance opportunities over skilled women; this allowed them to build up experience, and thus eventually gain skill. Thus, Yim Mijoung observed her female colleagues giving up drumming not because of lack of talent, but because the environment did not promote performance opportunities for female drummers to the extent that it did for men.

The practice of largely male teachers or senior drummers favoring men seems to come from the conception that men are “easier to work with and more comfortable, especially when changing clothes and carrying luggage” (Kim Yeong-eun 11/9/11), whereas women are “sensitive” about food options and sleeping arrangements, and thus require additional attention (Yim Mijoung 4/27/11). Yim Mijoung shared her observation that men in the field tend to

“proactively challenge the difficulties they confront”<sup>101</sup>: teachers and senior members appreciate this quality when recruiting, but it also reinforces the conception that men are easier to work with (8/17/11). She believed that men get more support from male senior members in college programs, although she acknowledged that women who actively challenge difficulties and ask for things often seem to have successful careers. The environment of drumming majors thus seems to be one in which the exclusion of women is normalized. Men look out for, help, and encourage each other, which results in excluding women from such mentoring.

This lack of mentorship and sponsorship bleeds into professional practice, contributing to the continued normalization of excluding women. Park Eunha has been the only female member of the *samulnori* team at Gugakwon for 30 years; most of her difficulties on the team seem to arise from this singular status. Indeed, Park Eunha’s recruitment for Gugakwon could not have happened without the support of Kim Yongbae, who, as the leader of the *samulnori* team at the time, knew her from their years of learning drumming from the same teacher. Kim Yongbae took on a sponsorship role that allowed for Park Eunha’s inclusion; there have been female interns, but, lacking sponsorship, they were not hired. As of 2011, there were women in their twenties practicing and performing as interns; however, because the test to be an associate member was open not only to interns but also to other applicants, their advantage as interns might be overshadowed by their gender.<sup>102</sup> Kim Yeong-eun (b.1967), a leader of Haedanghwa, worked as an intern for a year about ten years ago, but was not employed even though she got the best score on the test; instead, the *samulnori* team hired a male *soe* player, and she later heard

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<sup>101</sup> Yim Mijoung seems to consider that women in the field have been generally socialized to not be proactive.

<sup>102</sup> It turns out that those two female interns did not become associate members; at other times, male interns had become associate members.

that “if she were a man, she could be a member” (11/11/11). Her teacher, an evaluation committee member, objected to her test score being overlooked, but in vain; although that teacher supported her, the system of recruitment allowed for her continued exclusion. Limiting who is helped into the field in turn limits who is included at the professional level; the resulting male-dominated workplace can mean that even those women who are included end up isolated and treated as “other” within the group.



**Figure V-4:** Rehearsal by Gugakwon members including two female interns

When I visited Park Eunha in the women’s dressing room before the Gugakwon concert “Korean Traditional Performing Art Festival” in September 2011, she was delightedly chatting with other women performers—one guest performer and two interns. The guest performer, a drummer and dancer two years younger than Park Eunha, was helping with the other three women’s hair and make-up. Park Eunha confessed that she was “more lively and talkative” because there were other women—especially one from her generation—to share the space,

whereas she used to be alone in the room (9/9/11). This suggests that her status as the only woman on the team has affected her personality within her workplace.

Pyo Seonu (b.1978), who has worked at the *namsadang* troupe (Anseong Municipal Namsadang Baudeogi Pungmuldan) affiliated with Anseong in Gyeonggi province for eleven years, suspected that she would be “lonely if there was only her in the group” (8/18/11). According to her, as of 2011, there were four women out of 30 members in the troupe; there had been a maximum of eight women at another point. She noted that the women got along among themselves, but found themselves in conflict with some men who did not understand, for instance, why women put on make-up while men set up the stage, insisting that women should do the same job as men do.

Unlike Gugakwon performers, who were tenured once hired as associate members, Pyo Seonu’s job was based on a two-year contract, which could be renewed at semi-year evaluations. Members would be fired if they did not pass a certain level of the evaluation exam; she believed that this evaluation system played a positive role in that members kept practicing and building up their skills. She admitted that there was a hierarchical relationship between seniors and juniors; she saw junior members in their early twenties quit, possibly due to their difficulty standing in the face of the “*gi*” from senior members, both men and women. However, members got equal performance opportunities, and were paid extra per performance in addition to the regular paycheck. Furthermore, she thought that her troupe was “not that hierarchical compared to all-men’s groups”; she believed that it would be more hierarchical if there were no women inside the troupe (8/18/11).

The issues discussed so far center on the normalization of the exclusion of women—how that is enacted and perpetuated, and the consequences of it for women in the field. However,

exclusion can also re-emerge as an issue when a woman's performance career comes into conflict with her life trajectory—specifically, regarding children. For women considering having children, they must contend with breaks in their careers, dramatic physical change, new responsibilities, and new expectations in fulfilling a traditional woman's role.

The story of Shin Heeyeon illustrates the issues that can arise specifically from concerns regarding how pregnancy and childbirth affect one's body. Particularly, her stress about performance activities post-labor underlines a common concern about keeping one's body in performing condition, since *pungmul* performance demands intense physicality. Along the same lines, Yu Kyung-Hwa (b.1967), a drummer and *cheolhyeongeum* player, asserted that “it is twice as hard for married women musicians than men,” in that women not only need to take care of children and housework, but often experience changes to their bodies—for instance, “their physical body and bones become weak after childbirth” (8/6/10). Yu Kyung-Hwa could not move her fingers to play *geomungo* (a six-stringed plucked zither) in the way she did before having children;<sup>103</sup> to compensate, she began to learn *cheolhyeongeum*, a zither played with a pick. Nonetheless, she considered the experience of pregnancy as enhancing her art:

After giving birth, I think my music has become deeper and my perspective changed. I always tell my students that childbirth is a blessing although the marriage might be fatal. My music is usually influenced by others' art and exhibition, but what impressed me most in terms of music was “being pregnant.” (Yu Kyung-Hwa 8/6/10)

Jung Hyun Ah (b.1977), a leader of Rhyta who continued performing after having a child, noted that women older than their mid-thirties were rarely present in the professional

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<sup>103</sup> This specific example may not be applicable to many Korean women performers. But it seems that some of these women have been socialized to expect a degree of physical change, given Korean culture surrounding women's childbirth and postnatal care. In Korea, it is strongly believed and practiced that women who have given birth should receive care and be inactive for at least for twenty one days, to lessen the aftereffects on their bodies as they age (Kim Joohee 2007).

drumming field. For her, making the body ready for performance did not pose any major difficulties: “physicality does not matter as long as I need time for warming-up since I have been doing this for a long time” (11/6/11). Instead, she considered how much of an issue family support would become when continuing to work during marriage and after childbirth. Nevertheless, she too was concerned about audience perception of her pregnant body; during her pregnancy, she gave lessons but did not perform, because she thought that her appearance might be a problem for the audience. Jung Hyun Ah did not devalue the physical aspect, but her point of view differed from Shin Heeyeon; however, this might be influenced by Jung Hyun Ah not performing drumming in standing position, which demands more intense physicality.

Some married women drummers informed me that they had to spend less time on their children and housework to maintain their career. Kim Yeong-eun of Haedanghwa has gotten help from her mother, who has lived in her house and has taken care of her two daughters. She implied that she was not a good mother since she devoted so much time to composing and preparing for performance. Nonetheless, she believed that her example would positively influence her children:

I have a belief that it will be good for my daughters to show them that I enjoy what I am doing and I work hard. They seem to be proud of me in that I compose art works, and not for money. They show their interest in coming to watch my shows. (Kim Yeong-eun 11/11/11)

Similarly, Jo Hansook (b.1960), a *sangsoe* of Pyeongtaek *nongak* and leader of Cheonan *pungmul* group, confessed that her children were not her first priority. She was determined not to give up her job after marriage, to the extent that, before getting married, she asked her husband to agree to her working. Her husband and her mother were supportive, especially taking care of the two children. When her husband’s business did not go well and her family emigrated to the United States, she decided to stay in Korea because of her work. Her children “expressed

their resentment” (7/20/11); however, while she felt sorry for her children and husband, she has been able to accomplish what she has—being a director of the Cheonan *pungmul* group and obtaining a master’s degree—because she gave up her role as a mother and wife. She told me that her children, who, as of 2011, were in their twenties, came to appreciate what she did and had accomplished.

Pyo Seonu had one daughter who went to preschool. She was reluctant to have another child because of her “fear of losing her position during maternity leave” (7/19/08). Her position as *janggu* player was given away during her maternity leave, and she could not play her primary instrument when she returned; she was later able to reclaim the *janggu* position when someone left the troupe. She also pointed out that the policy about maternity leave was not established in her troupe; while she had one year of maternity leave with 30% payment, her colleague on maternity leave before her did not get paid at all during leave.

An interesting addendum to these distinctly gendered issues revolves around society’s perception of drumming as part of the culture. This perception in turn places a larger onus on women practitioners than men. Drummers often are not considered “real” musicians, an attitude that devalues their practice. Kim Hannah (b.1981), a drummer of the female *gugak* ensemble Daseureum, found that drumming was still not recognized as an artistically “valid” genre. When she told non-musicians of her job playing *janggu*, she often felt that they would lose respect for her, because “what she does is not considered ‘music’ or ‘art’” (7/26/11). Lee Chohye and Moon Injae, *yeonhui* majors at Hanyejong, used to have people “disrespect what they do,” and they received skeptical comments on their futures prior to entering Hanyejong and studying with Kim Duk Soo (11/9/11).



While these women felt devalued in comparison with other musical genres, Pyo Seonu grew up at a time when traditional music as a whole got little respect. She “felt shame” for playing the role of *mudong* in a *namsadang* troupe when she was in elementary school, when it was not as appreciated as much as it is now (8/18/11). She was also diffident because those who were *mudong* were largely lower-class; children from rich families learned piano and dance at the time. When she moved from middle to high school, however, she got a fellowship for playing the role of *sangsoe*; she was also allowed to have long hair, as opposed to her classmates. Sensing that she became the object of “envy” because of this special treatment, she began to feel confident about what she was doing. She found that the “social status of drummer has been changed,” not only in that she gets paid well from drumming lessons, but also because she has performed at a “fancy” and “dignified” concert hall, compared to the traditional makeshift venues and itinerant performances of earlier eras (8/18/11).

As the perception of traditional music changed, some traditional musicians enjoyed a new level of respect and status. However, women drummers were frequently still treated as “lesser” because of the genre they performed. Park Kyung Jin (b.1984), a drummer in Daseureum, was frustrated with statements implying that women musicians, especially those involved in traditional music, are “decadent.” She met a businessman in his sixties who told her that “men wouldn’t like it if you are a woman doing *gugak*,” and “you should stop if you want to get married” (7/26/11). Kang Seonil, a member of Gongmyoung, pointed out that “if [that businessman] was familiar with *yojeong* culture, he could have looked down on *gugak* musicians” (7/26/11).<sup>104</sup> The *gisaeng* working at *yojeong* were gradually replaced by *gugak*

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<sup>104</sup> *Yojeong* is a kind of restaurant where *gisaeng* used to serve and perform music and dance for male customers, especially businessmen and politicians. After the Japanese colonial period ended, the *gisaeng* trained in music and dance disappeared, but women in *yojeong* still served male customers alcohol. Since the late twentieth century, many *yojeong* have been abolished and have become regular restaurants (“Yojeong,” in *Hanguk minjok munhwa*

musicians during the postcolonial period; as a result, *gugak* became associated with the idea of women performing for men at *yojeong*. The businessman in Park Kyung Jin's story may thus have associated her role as a drummer with the social stigma of *yojeong* performers. This placed a special burden on Park Kyung Jin as a woman, to differentiate herself from that old stigma.

Along the same lines, Jung Hyun Ah informed me that *dwipuri*, a wrap-up party after performance, was useful for networking because musicians as well as government officials, production agents, and theater staff discussed organizing performances and hiring performers. However, since it involved drinking alcohol, "men often asked women to pour alcohol for them, [behaved inappropriately], and made remarks that could be considered sexual harassment to women" (11/6/11). These behaviors evidence a perception that women performers were not "real" musicians, but existed in the context of entertainment for men.

## Conclusion

My discussions of professional women drummers may seem to focus too much on the more unpleasant aspects of the drumming field. This is necessary to an extent in that the barriers for women in the field are pervasive and strong. Nonetheless, many women have found ways to participate, whether by challenging those barriers or working around them. Performers such as Park Eunha and Oh Hyun-ju have flourished in the performing field by challenging gender-based barriers and tirelessly developing their musical skills. Others, even though they are generally not seen on bigger performing stages, maintain their presence by giving private lessons, teaching classes, or taking lessons from master drummers. Generational shifts are also highly significant;

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*daebaekgwa sajeon* [Encyclopedia of Korean Culture], available at <http://terms.naver.com/entry.nhn?docId=569130&cid=1605&categoryId=1605>, accessed in December 2013).

it seems to me that the younger generation of women drummers, especially those in their teens and twenties, enjoy the sense of competition with men, bolstered by confidence in their drumming skills and physicality. With the percentage of women consistently increasing in the field, the support among them increases as well. Thus encouraged, these newer drummers have more people telling them that they *can* do this, rather than trying to persuade them to give up. This promises to provide an increasingly women-friendly future for drumming.

## Chapter VI. Women's Exclusion from Drumming: *Pansori* and Shaman Ritual

When I was young, I thought I would be the master *gosu* [drummer in *pansori*, in this context]. As I get older, however, I find it unrealistic. There is a certain energy required for *gosu* from a musical perspective. I believe that there is *eum* and *yang* in music; I consider them important and apply them in my music-making. I also believe that those who appropriately perform the *giun* [energy] of *eum* and *yang* would be the best musicians...The *giun* of *gosu* is *yang*. Singers appear to have more control, but *gosu* needs to control the singer, sometimes by being encouraging when the singer is exhausted and sometimes by calming the singer down when too energized. That is why it is said “il *gosu* i myeongchang [lit. first the *gosu* and second the master singer].” So, the *giun* should be that of *yang*. It seems for me that it is because of the *giun* of music rather than *namjonyeobi* [the ideology of valuing men over women] that *gosu* have been men. The masters must have known this. (8/6/10)

This is how Yu Kyung-Hwa, one of my primary collaborators, rationalized the dominance of men as *gosu*. She believes that *pansori gobeop*, the drum accompaniment in *pansori*, needs the “energy of *yang*,” based on her theory of *eum* and *yang* in musical performance.<sup>105</sup> Her statement reveals many interesting preconceptions. In applying the Confucian concept of *eum* and *yang* to music-making, the gendered roles of *eum* and *yang* come into play.<sup>106</sup> That *yang* is associated with men cannot be separated from the association of men with leadership roles. Therefore, her interpretation of the leading role of *gosu* in *pansori*, while justified by the *yang* energy of *gosu*, also presupposes that *yang*—associated with men—must lead the *eum*. Furthermore, the role she ascribes to *yang* energy is not merely “strong”; it is “dominant,” “leading”—that is, in her conception *yang* dominates and controls *eum*, as opposed to *eum* and *yang* working as equal opposites. Her assertion of the necessity of an intrinsically “masculine”

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<sup>105</sup> The term *gobeop* (lit. drumming technique) is often used within the field; according to Jeong Hwayeong, the term first became popularized by *gosu* Kim Myeonghwan when he was designated a holder of Important Intangible Cultural Heritage. It often refers to the *pansori gobeop*, but more generally can refer to any solo drum accompaniment in other performing genres.

<sup>106</sup> Her theory of *eum* and *yang* is discussed in Chapter III (P.71-72).

energy in *pansori gobeop* is thus based on a certain circular reasoning: *pansori gobeop* must be led by *yang* energy, and *yang* energy resides in men, and men must lead. This is also reflected in her invocation of the expression “Il-*gosu* i-myeongchang,” which normalizes the practice of assigning *pansori gobeop* to maleness. Men lead, and thus the lead role must be “masculine.”

This strong belief in the musical necessity of an intrinsically “masculine” energy for a particular musical practice spurred me to examine *pansori gobeop* as a male realm. As I interacted with *pansori gosu*, I came to find that male drummers consider “maleness”—which they relate to *chuimsae* (vocal interjections) performed in a low voice, the “dignity” expressed by wearing clothing of *seonbi* (male literati in the Joseon Dynasty), and physical power in drumming—essential for *pansori gobeop* and thus conceive of the genre as essentially male. This conception is not, however, limited to men; many women, even drummers, also believe that maleness is necessary for this drumming. As a result, despite the engagement of women in many styles of drumming through the Korean public education system, they continue to be excluded from some musical genres. This chapter addresses the exclusion of women from playing drums through case studies of two performance genres: *pansori*, and Gangneung *danogut*, shaman rituals performed by hereditary shaman families. I approach these cases with some questions regarding gendered practices. What are the naturalized gendered practices in these cases? What conceptions and discourses contribute to the naturalization? Have women challenged the normative practice? Alternately, how have they negotiated the norm? Dividing the chapter into two sections, *pansori gobeop* and Gangneung *danogut*, I examine the naturalization of men as drummers through a discourse that presents maleness as essential to drumming. I define the parameters of the discussion based on what drummers as well as singers say about their practice,

tracing their construction of what makes an idealized drummer. I then analyze how ideas and ideals of drummers both create and reinforce these male-centered practices.

### ***Pansori***

*Pansori* is a theatrical performing art in which a singer (called *gwangdae*, *soriggun*, or *changja*) tells a story through a combination of singing, talking, and bodily movement, accompanied by a *buk* or barrel drum player called a *gosu*. The genre is generally believed to have originally been performed by male members of itinerant shaman troupes in the southwestern regions. It developed as a sophisticated art form in the nineteenth century with the support and sponsorship of the upper class; performers gained such prestige that master singers (*myeongchang*) emerged in the field (Seo You Seok 2011). Both singer and drummer were men from the lowest class until the late Joseon Dynasty, when female professional entertainers (*gisaeng*) began to expand their repertoire by learning *pansori* from male professionals. Female singers became increasingly popular in the early twentieth century; nowadays, *pansori* singers are predominantly women. In contrast, *pansori gobeop*, the drum accompaniment for *pansori* singers, has remained a male realm. The list of *jeonseungja*—current *boyuja*, candidates, and assistant instructors—of Important Intangible Cultural Heritage No. 5, as designated and supported by the Korean government for the transmission of the genre, reflects this disparity: according to the data as of 2013, of the six *gobeop* players, all are men, whereas thirteen of sixteen singers are women (Cultural Heritage Administration 2013b).



**FigureVI-1:** Paint “*Pansorido*” by Gisan Kim Jun-geun in the late Joseon Dynasty © Neibeo jisik baekgwa

### *Pansori Gobeop*

*Pansori gosu* used to be strictly subordinate and tied to a singer; the two performers lived, ate, travelled, and performed together, but the *gosu* was paid less and had a lower social status.<sup>107</sup> According to Song Mi Kyoung (2011), *gosu* began to gain appreciation from audiences in the 1910s, in the context of modern theaters and recordings. Nowadays, *gosu* are rarely associated with a particular singer, but they are sometimes recognized as master players in their own right and hired whenever a *pansori* performance is organized. Lee Taebaek, a male

<sup>107</sup> Some *gosu*, in response to this unequal treatment, sought to become master singers. Indeed, being a *gosu* was often recognized as a step to becoming a singer (Choi Donghyeon 1992; Song Mi Kyoung 2011). Similarly, some *pansori* singer apprentices who fail to obtain the necessary voice/vocal technique are switched to *gosu* (Lee Yoon Sun 2011).

drummer, *ajaeng* player, and *pansori* singer, described the relationship of *gosu* and singer in *pansori*:

One should be able to master the whole story, make a singer comfortable, control the beat/tempo/dynamics, and make a strong drumming sound during climaxes and dramatic moments... When the drumming is not strong enough to support singing during that time, the performance quality will decrease. Since there are only two performers on the *pansori* performance stage, the sound of the *buk* can make that of the singer chilled or alive. (Lee Taebaek 9/24/11)

Whereas in the past *pansori gosu* came to the genre through knowledge of all aspects of *pansori* repertoire, today's *pansori* drummers are generally students trained in multiple drumming genres. As a result, many women majoring in drumming are exposed to and learn *pansori* drumming; however, their knowledge has not translated to onstage visibility or popular acclaim. In particular, while women may play *buk* for colleagues at small concerts, *changjak pansori* performance, and *pansori/gobeop* competitions, they have been excluded from drumming full-length (*wanchang*) *pansori* performances. The list of *pansori* drummers who performed in 2009-11 at the “*wanchang pansori*” series, organized for the past twenty-eight years by the National Theater of Korea, are with only one exception male—well-known master drummers from older generations. *Pansori* drumming has thus remained relatively unaffected by the increase in professional women drummers trained in the public education system, even as those women begin to flourish in other performance genres such as *pungmul* and *samulnori*. This is due to popular conceptions of drumming in general, and *pansori* drumming in particular, as inherently “masculine” in character.





**Figure VI-2:** *Pansori* performance of singer Park Songhee and *gosu* Kim Cheongman (right) © National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage

### Expressions Conveying Common Conceptions of *Pansori*

When drummers involved in *pansori gobeop* discuss the role and importance of *gosu* in *pansori*, they frequently invoke popular expressions conveying what are considered truisms in the conception of the genre: “Il-*gosu* i-myeongchang” (lit. first the *gosu*, second the master singer), and “Sonyeon myeongchang eun isseodo sonyeon *gosu* neun eopda” (lit. there is a boy master singer but no boy master *gosu*). These expressions not only represent what those in the circle of *pansori* believe, but are also constantly repeated to rationalize the construction of particular qualities essential in *pansori* drumming.

Every drummer I interviewed mentioned “First the *gosu*, second the master singer” when emphasizing the *gosu*’s role. The expression may easily be interpreted as the *gosu* being more important than the singer, although the prominent scholar Lee Bohyung (5/9/13) claimed that it means that “the singer can sing well when paired with the right *gosu*.” For most drummers, the

expression signifies the *gosu*'s leading role in *pansori* performance; it “represents the recognition of the *gosu*'s importance and the perception of their improved status” (Choi Donghyeon 1991, in Song Mi Kyoung 2011). This greatly contrasts with the previously subordinate status of the *gosu*. Although the expression does not assign gender to either drummer or singer, it seems that the relatively recent conceptualization of the *gosu* as the leader of the *pansori* performance is often used to reinforce the vision of the drummer as necessarily male, especially now that women are *pansori* singers.<sup>108</sup>

“There is a boy master singer but no boy master *gosu*” implies the primacy of the *gosu*, by suggesting that higher skill is required for the drummer. A youth could potentially master *pansori* singing, but *gosu* is only possible for highly trained and experienced artists. By extension, one can become a master *gosu* only through a long period of training and performance experience. This idea contributes to the normative practice in which singers seek experienced drummers, who are almost always mature men; in turn, this maintains women's position as perpetually “new” to the role of *gosu*. Women are equated with youthful inexperience, physical incapability, and amateur status—and thus, unqualified as *pansori gosu*. According to Lee Taebaek, the reluctance to perform with young drummers extends to left-handed and women drummers. However, he observed that certain famous *gosu* have been left-handed, and that young drummers have sometimes accompanied master *pansori* singers; for instance, Lee Taebaek was a *gosu* for the master singers Kim Sohee, An Sukseon, and Seong Changsun—all women—when he was a college student. This suggests that the injunction against women as *gosu* is not really about experience or physical capability; nonetheless, the fact that the expression

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<sup>108</sup> It could be the case that the *gosu*'s role has become more important as women have become *pansori* singers, but I do not see clear evidence for this.

continues to hold weight creates a feedback loop hindering the progress of women as *gosu*. Because women have entered the practice recently, they are as a whole relatively inexperienced, which in turn prevents them from developing performance experience. Such a self-perpetuating system, emphasizing experience as important but only enforcing that standard for one gender, inherently excludes women from *pansori* drum performance.

### **The Construction of Idealized *Pansori Gosu***

Most of the male drummers I interacted with acknowledged their privilege as men but continued to rationalize the predominance of men in *pansori* drumming. They constructed an idealized *pansori gosu* as characterized by qualities that, in their view, can only be properly performed by men, including *chuimsae*, dignity, and physical power.

*Chuimsae* seems to be a crucial barrier women face in becoming *pansori gosu*. Considered an important aesthetic expression of Korean performing arts, *chuimsae* refers to the vocal interjections performed by a drummer and sometimes the audience.<sup>109</sup> It provides encouragement to and approval of the *pansori* singer, generating energy for their performance, but can also cleverly disguise a weak sound from the singer (Song Mi Kyoung 2011).

“Women’s high-pitched *chuimsae* does not bring out *heung* (excitement/enthusiasm)” (5/13/11), the iconic *gosu* Kim Cheongman told me. A candidate for *boyuja* of IICH for *pansori gobeop*, he is one of the most active and valued *gosu* in the field. He believed that only men can present *chuimsae* effectively. Kim Sumi, a woman *pansori* singer trained in *pansori gobeop*, similarly emphasized the importance of a low voice in the presentation of *chuimsae*. She

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<sup>109</sup> *Chuimsae* is considered one of three essential qualifications for *gosu* in addition to posture and drumming technique; some musicians, such as the master *gosu* Song Yeonjae, even weigh *chuimsae* over drumming technique (Choi Donghyeon 1992).

recounted the praise she received for her *chuimsae* during a rehearsal of *geomungo* sanjo performed by a student of the master Jeong Daeseok; Jeong Daeseok complimented her, saying that he had not heard such excellent *chuimsae* for a long time. While such experiences suggest that women are capable of performing *chuimsae* well, Kim Sumi has a low, thick, husky voice that fits with the ideal for *chuimsae*; the higher pitch of most women's voices remains undesirable.

Jeong Hwayeong, the second oldest *gosu* in the field of *pansori*, claimed that “women cannot present *gyeok*, or the ‘dignity’ significant in *pansori*” (9/6/11). He asserted that only men's *chuimsae* present dignity. At one point, he stated that pairing a female *gosu* and female singer in *pansori* upsets the balance of *eum* and *yang*. Nonetheless, in response to the follow-up question, “Is female *gosu* okay for male singers, then?” he answered, “not really.” He continued, “since the *buk* itself carries dignity, women's playing *buk* does not sound right, and thus looks light and less dignified.” Such circular rationalization of the *gosu* as necessarily male is present even in his discussion of the clothing worn for *pansori* performance. Speaking of the dignity imbued by men's clothing, Joeng Hwayeong stated, “Maleness as presented by *hanbok* and *gat* (black hat) would make a difference.”<sup>110</sup> Men's *hanbok* and *gat*, the standard clothing of the literati class called *seonbi* in the Joseon Dynasty, are often used in contemporary performances of traditional music. The *seonbi* clothing seems to mediate between the “dignity” signified by the literati class and the ideal dignity expressed in *pansori* performance. For Jeong Hwayeong, the elements of “dignity” in *pansori* are thus all male: the *chuimsae* is only dignified when

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<sup>110</sup> In the past, married men first tied their hair in a topknot, which symbolized the male sex, and then put on their *gat*. Since men rarely have their hair long nowadays, they attach an artificial topknot (called *sangtu*) to wear a *gat*.

performed in a man's voice; playing the *buk* requires inherent "masculinity" because the instrument invokes dignity; and *seonbi* clothing encapsulates the expression of dignity.

Finally, physical power is an important quality for *pansori gobeop* among many performers, and they construe such power as intrinsically "masculine." Jeong Hoesok, a *pansori* singer and *gosu*, is the third generation of a family of *pansori* singers; his *gosu* was the legendary master Kim Myeonghwan, who taught him *gobeop* and was also *gosu* for his father and grandfather. He remembered, "when I saw [Kim Myeonghwan] on stage, I became automatically energized. He was powerful and experienced, and good at performing the dynamics of tension and release. He pressed me when I accelerated, and he drove me when I dragged" (9/27/11). He considered such powerful energy—especially when playing *ongak*, the technique of forcefully hitting the top of the wooden frame during the climax of *pansori*—to be performed better by men. Lee Taebaek shared a similar opinion:

If a male singer sings in a loud voice but the female *gosu* performs *chuimsae* with a "light" and "thin" voice and plays drums with weak energy, the performance may not be presented as dramatically as it needs to be. The *gosu* should be able to play a strong sound softly, and at the same time to play a soft sound strongly—to make a strong sound, one needs physical power. (Lee Taebaek 9/24/11)

For both these men and many others, women are physically incapable of playing *buk* as powerfully as men. Indeed, Jeong Hoesok implied that even holding the sitting posture for four to eight hours of a full-length *pansori* would be difficult for women.

By attaching "masculine" characteristics to an already "masculinized" practice, these drummers rationalize the necessity that *pansori gosu* be men. They construct an idealized *pansori gosu* based on a maleness perceived as both defining and inherent. This naturalization in turn "denaturalizes" women as *buk* players. For example, Kim Gyuhyeong, a male drummer

who grew up in a *pansori* family, considered women *gosu* “unnatural” due to their perceived failure to adhere to the qualities considered ideal for *gosu*:

This may sound like a sexist remark. Imagine the female driver of a huge container truck. She may be a skillful driver, but her image doing it does not look “right.” Along the same line, even though a woman can do *chuimsae* in a low and husky voice as powerfully as men, this may not be good but rather “unnatural.” (Kim Gyuhyeong 10/17/11)

Kim Gyuhyeong used the expressions “strange,” “awkward,” and “unnatural” to describe women who perform what are stereotypically male jobs. He did not seem to mean that those women are not seen as fully female, but rather that what they do is against social expectations—with the implication that social expectations are based on the natural order.

Such discourse and practices are well-established in the *pansori* circle; according to Kim Cheongman, the male master singer Park Dongjin (1916-2003) once said, “How can women dare to play *buk*!” (8/27/11). This expresses an attitude typical of older generations who strongly object to female *gosu*. Such naturalized practice seems to have led to the absence of female *pansori gosu* until recent decades.<sup>111</sup> Seo Jin-gyeong, the daughter and manager of the master singer Park Songhee and a *pansori* singer herself, observed that the older generations of singers have tended to be stubborn about gender roles in part because they never performed with female *gosu*, and because there have been no well-known female *gosu*. The male master singer Song Sunseop,<sup>112</sup> who has often been accompanied by female *gosu*, criticized the circumstances in which women have not been asked to play as *gosu* in *pansori* because of the prejudice that “women are weak and soft”:

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<sup>111</sup> According to Kim Sumi, until the mid-1980s Shin Yugyeong (born in the 1920s or 1930s) played *janggu* for *sanjo* or *gayageum byeongchang* when students of Park Gwihee (the master in *gayageum byeongchang*) participated in competitions. No other women *gosu* prior to those currently playing were mentioned in these interviews.

<sup>112</sup> (b. 1936) *Boyuja* of *pansori* “Jeokbyeokga” as Important Intangible Cultural Heritage No. 5, appointed in 2002.

I am the only one who performs *pansori* with female *gosu*. I would say to [those *pansori* singers who taught but did not play with female *gosu*], “Don’t teach them, if you do not intend to play with them on stage.” Since I taught [Jeong Hyangja] and she knows my *pansori*, I have been performing with her for 20 years... Now even female singers do not want to perform with female *gosu*. If they stick with the old practice that *gosu* should be men, [female singers] should not sing because women were not able to sing in the earlier history of *pansori*. (Song Sunseop 11/5/11)

By historically blocking the participation of women drummers in *pansori*, the idealization of maleness essential for *pansori gosu* continues to discourage both older and younger generations of singers to request women to perform with them. Lee Taebaek said that he expected this to change soon, given the increasing number of female students learning *pansori gobeop*. Asked whether he had any outstanding female *buk* players among his students, however, he said there was no one yet.

Although Seo Jin-gyeong agreed that the increasing number of female students learning *pansori gobeop* and participating in competitions showed progress, she also observed that no women have aggressively challenged the maleness of *pansori gobeop*. She did not think that the women’s exclusion from *pansori* drumming could be broken by a single outstanding female drummer; rather she pointed to three elements which would alter the situation of *pansori* drumming practice: first, there must be many women drummers; second, singers must perform with them regularly; and third, these women drummers must show excellent skill. Considering the current state of discourse and practice, the second will likely prove the most difficult to achieve.

## Women *Gosu* Challenging the Norm

Some women *pansori gosu* have challenged the gendered norms of *pansori* drumming to varying degrees. Their stories illuminate not only the barriers to women performing as *gosu* but also gradual changes in their reception.

Kim Sumi (b.1970), a student of the female master singer Seong Uhyang,<sup>113</sup> has taught both *pansori* and *gobeop* at colleges. She learned *pansori* singing first, but became fascinated by *pansori gobeop* when she was fifteen years old. She recalled practicing playing *soribuk* (another term for *buk*, particularly in *pansori*) all day except when eating and sleeping. However, she was discouraged by a *gobeop* teacher; although the teacher instructed her in *gobeop* as a way of understanding rhythmic patterns as a singer, he also told her that *gobeop* is not a women's practice. Although she returned to her study of *pansori* singing, Kim Sumi confessed that she would have pursued a career as a *pansori gosu* rather than singer if she were a man. Nevertheless, she participated in the national *gosu* competition (the only woman at the time), receiving the silver prize in the student category in 1988 when she was a third year student in high school, and the grand prize in the general category in 1990 when she was in college.<sup>114</sup> Even though she was a *pansori* singing student at college, she performed as *gosu* for her colleagues on stage; she sometimes received compliments on her drumming, yet was also asked why she, a woman, played *buk* when she could be singing. Indeed, after graduating from college, she stopped performing as *gosu* on stage to focus on cultivating a reputation as a singer.

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<sup>113</sup> (b.1933) *Boyuja* of *pansori* “Chunhyangga” as Important Intangible Cultural Heritage No. 5, appointed by the national government in 2002.

<sup>114</sup> There are usually three categories—“*haksaeng* (student),” “*ilban* (general),” and “*myeonggo* (master *gosu*)”—in *gobeop* competitions.



Kim Sumi enjoys the tension between herself and a singer when she performs as a *gosu*; she likes the way that a singer performs differently depending on her drumming. Having performed as both singer and *gosu*, she has a unique perspective on the relationship between the performers:

The singer and *gosu* need *mildang* [lit. pushing and pulling]. Only those who have experience can tell it. It is almost like a competition between singer and *gosu*. That relationship used to be the standard in the past, but it is not applicable any more. The way of telling a story and singing has been fixed with specific rhythmic patterns and drumming techniques. So, the performance does not bring out tension any more, although it is now smoother. (Kim Sumi 9/7/11)

She had worn *seonbi* clothing when performing as *gosu* on stage, because she believed that the traditional “masculine” visual form would provide “stability and tranquility.” In appearance, therefore, she conformed to the normative conception of *pansori gosu* as men, donning male clothing as a way of inhabiting a supposedly male role. Now, however, it has become standard for women *gosu* to wear women’s *hanbok*.

*Gosu* Jeong Hyangja (b.1946) began studying *pansori* singing and *gobeop* with the *pansori* master Song Sunseop. She met him when she was 47 and a mother of four children. Although she participated in *gosu* competitions and received some prizes, including the silver prize in the most advanced category at the 2002 competition, she felt that competitions are unfair for women; she found that committee members tended to exclude women contestants or judge them more critically. This led her to stop participating in competitions for the President’s prize (called *daetongryeong sang*; the highest honor), instead concentrating on her accompanying role for Song Sunseop. In 1998 she first accompanied Song Sunseop in public performance; since then she has mostly played *buk* when Song Sunseop teaches *pansori*, and has occasionally accompanied him in performance when his usual *gosu*—Park Geunyoung, Jeong Hyangja’s teacher—is unavailable. Since 2004, Park Geunyoung and Jeong Hyangja have also shared the

role of *gosu* when Song Sunseop performs a full-length *pansori*—often three to five hours—at the National Theater of Korea; the recent full-length performances have generally been divided into two sessions, one featuring Jeong Hyangja and the other Park Geunyoung.



**Figure VI-3:** *Pansori* performance by singer Song Sunseop and *gosu* Jeong Hyangja (right)

Although Jeong Hyangja felt grateful for the opportunity to perform on *buk* with Song Sunseop, she has been very conscious of her status as a female drummer when on stage with him:

I am always careful when performing with Song *seonsaengnim* [lit. teacher] on stage because I am a woman. He, regardless of the prejudice against women *gosu* by those in the same field, lets me play with him on stage. I am trying not to make any mistake or disturb his performance; I think I have been able to do a decent job, making the audience pay attention to his performance. (11/5/11)

She believed that her studies and performances have helped to open the door to *pansori gobeop* for other women. Rather than focusing on drumming technique alone, she emphasized that *gosu* should know the *pansori* repertoires of songs and narratives as well as become attuned to a singer's personal style and character. For her, the *gosu*'s role is to help the singer perform well

and comfortably; she considers the *gosu* a secondary figure in performance, carrying the role of accompanist. Her conception contrasts with that of the male drummers who believe the *gosu*'s role is leading. Her attitude seems to derive from the importance of the teacher-student relationship with Song Sunseop; however, her continual emphasis on that relationship is itself self-effacing in a manner that is expected of a woman in any role. Thus her concept of the *gosu* is based on her conception of herself, a woman, as *gosu*—which is hugely influenced by a conception of women as supportive and subordinate.

Gyun Eun Kyung (b.1981) is a professional *pansori gosu*, currently pursuing a doctoral degree in *taak*. As of 2013 performing *pansori* comprised a third of her total performance activities; she has also played *janggu* as an accompanist in other genres including sanjo and sinawi. She first learned the *janggu*'s rhythmic patterns for dance and *pungmul*; at 20 years old, she decided to specialize in *pansori gobeop* as a student of the male *gosu* Park Geunyeong.<sup>115</sup> Since graduating from college, she has enjoyed many performance opportunities, generally coordinated by Park Geunyeong. Park Geunyeong also introduced her to Chae Sujeong, one of the first generation of students of the master singer Park Songhee.<sup>116</sup> Chae Sujeong in turn recommended Gyun Eun Kyung to Park Songhee as a good *buk* player for student presentations. Park Songhee initially refused to play with Gyun Eun Kyung; however, with the encouragement of Chae Sujeong and Seo Jin-gyeong, she and her students performed with Gyun Eun Kyung and were impressed by her *gobeop*, specifically her powerful drumming and *chuimsae* and her ability to adjust to the singer. Gyun Eun Kyung has occasionally played as *gosu* when Park Songhee

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<sup>115</sup> (b.1959) *Boyuja* of *pansori gobeop* as Intangible Cultural Heritage No. 17, appointed by the Daejeon city government.

<sup>116</sup> (b.1927) *Boyuja* of *pansori* “Heungboga” as Important Intangible Cultural Heritage No. 5, appointed by the national government in 2002.

performs with her students; however, Park Songhee continues to use a male *gosu* when performing alone. Gyun Eun Kyung has also played *buk* at full-length *pansori* performances, mostly for teenage singers, and she has played *gobeop* in performances featuring students of the master singer Yoo Yeonghae<sup>117</sup> for six years.



**Figure VI-4:** *Pansori* performance by singer Chae Sujeong and *gosu* Gyun Eun Kyung (right)

Gyun Eun Kyung feels that her gender identity holds her back as a *pansori gosu* more than her age. She experienced gender discrimination at competitions she attended in 2004-06; although she received a few prizes, like Jeong Hyangja, the evaluation committee told her that they would not offer her the President's prize because of her gender. Also, she often heard the common assessment that a woman's *gosu* would be a poor match for a woman singer, from the

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<sup>117</sup> (b.1949) *Boyuja* of *pansori* "Simcheongga" as Intangible Cultural Heritage No. 2, appointed by the Jeollabukdo province government.

perspective of the balance of *eum* and *yang*. While she believed that she would get more performance opportunities as she built her career and reputation, she has remained particularly conscious of her “female” voice and small body size. Significantly, she addressed this complex by successfully making her voice “thick” like a man’s for *chuimsae*.

Comparing her experiences as a *buk* player in *pansori* and as a *janggu* player in sanjo and sinawi, Gyun Eun Kyung asserted that playing *gobeop* demands a lot more energy, in terms of mental work and drumming technique. A *pansori gosu* needs to pay attention to a singer’s vocalization, narrative, and bodily movement during performance. Gyun Eun Kyung thought *pansori gosu* would demand more concentration than a *janggu* accompanist, who generally focuses on the melody in one or more instruments. Likewise, while *janggu* is played at three spots, *pansori gobeop* hits the spots of the *buk* in five different ways (e.g. ongak, bangak, maehwajeom, gungpyeon, and chaegung).<sup>118</sup> Finally, despite the belief that performing a full-length *pansori* is more difficult for a singer than a *gosu*, she found the opposite to be true. When legendary *gosu* such as Kim Myeonghwan (1913-1989), Kim Deuksoo (1917-1990), and Kim Dongjoon (1929-1990) performed full-length *pansori*, two *gosu* were needed for a single singer’s performance. According to Gyun Eun Kyung, this suggests that *gobeop* requires more energy. She personally experienced bodily aches (called *momsal*) during “*aenggida*” (lit. to be embraced; to be clasped)—the intense connection occurring between drummer and instrument in performance—that did not occur when she played *janggu*.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> In *janggu* accompaniment, a right-handed drummer hits the center (*bokpan*) of the left drumhead with the bare left hand, while hitting the center and rim (*byeonjuk*) of the right drumhead with a stick in the right hand. For *buk* accompaniment, a right-handed drummer hits the center of the left drumhead with a bare hand, while hitting the center of the right drumhead and the front, edge and top of the wooden frame with a stick.

<sup>119</sup> She added one more anecdote to explain “*aenggida*”: Song Sunseop and Park Geungyeong were exhausted after a twenty-minute performance when Song participated in the *pansori* competition and received the President’s prize.

Following her teacher Park Geunyeong, Gyun Eun Kyung believed that the most important qualification for *pansori gosu* would be the ability to read the singer's wishes and thoughts. This skill requires much experience and therefore places the *gosu* in a position of leadership despite the accompaniment role onstage. Gyun Eun Kyung has experienced the significance of this leadership. In one case, she played *buk* in a full-length *pansori* performance for a high school student, and then a middle school student a month later, but in both cases failed to control the singers:

The first singer's voice went bad because I didn't do a good job in leading her. She didn't know it but I could definitely tell that it was my fault...since I didn't have much experience in a full-length performance at the time, I happened to play it as if it was a professional singer, and thus this young singer got her voice [hurt] in the beginning sections. That is, I encouraged her too much at the first sections and she ended up singing passionately from the beginning. Later on, since the singer had a hard time making a sound, I also had a hard time. A month afterwards, when I played *buk* for the second student's full-length *pansori* performance, I was too cautious about controlling her and thus the singer had too much energy left at the end. (4/23/13)

This shows the importance of the *gosu* in controlling a singer's distribution of energy throughout the performance. Young singers in particular depend on *gosu*, yet Gyun Eun Kyung informed me that all singers, even experienced ones, would require this type of guidance by the *gosu*. The experiences of Gyun Eun Kyung and Jeong Hangja seem to suggest that the dynamics between singer and drummer are influenced not only by gender, but also by their relationship and relative rank—e.g., who is a teacher, older, more experienced, better known, or more highly respected.

These three female *gosu* have had very different experiences as performers. Kim Sumi was discouraged from pursuing *pansori gosu* by her male teacher; a decade later, Jeong Hyangja and Gyun Eun Kyung were able to start careers with the help of their teachers and mentors, who were men. Yet despite this encouragement in school, Jeong Hyangja and Gyun Eun Kyung both experienced gender discrimination in the most advanced category of competition. The pressure

of performing *gosu* as women has affected not only these women's careers, but also their practices. Kim Sumi's use of male clothing and Gyun Eun Kyung's thickening of her voice in performance are both efforts to conform to the "masculinized" practice in *pansori gobeop*. Their understanding of and perspective on the role of *gosu* is similarly addressed by each performer as a personal challenge. In my conversations with these women, I interpreted their portrayals of the role of *gosu* as spanning the spectrum of the accompanist-soloist relationship. Kim Sumi saw the relation between *pansori* singer and *gosu* as equivalent, emphasizing the dynamics of "pushing and pulling"; Jeong Hyangja retained the "supportive and subordinate" role; Gyun Eun Kyung emphasized the leading role of *gosu*, sharing her experience of singers' depending on her.

The circumstances that led Kim Sumi to give up majoring in *pansori gobeop* and Jeong Hyangja to stop entering *gosu* competitions may be changing. It is encouraging that Jeong Hyangja has played *buk* for Song Sunseop, and Gyun Eun Kyung for Park Songhee and her students, even if in limited contexts. Singers are giving more opportunities for exposure to female drummers during their students' performances, which might well predispose them to female drummers later in their performing careers. The women who practice as *gosu* may be contributing to a new conception of what *gosu* could be; with the new wave of female *gosu* entering studies and competitions, the naturalization of maleness in *pansori gobeop* will likely be challenged, if not overcome, by the upcoming generation of drummers.

### **Gangneung *Danogut***

#### **Shamans and Shamanism in Korea**

Similar to *pansori*, shaman rituals are "traditional culture" that the government has preserved as Important Intangible Cultural Heritage. Korean shamanism, speculated to be

influenced by North Asian shamanism and to date from the Bronze Age (Lee Yong-Shik 2005), usually encompasses a variety of indigenous religious beliefs and practices of the Korean people.<sup>120</sup> Shamanism supposes that there are various deities who take care of the human sphere and (dead) spirits who are involved in human lives. The priests who conduct rituals to worship such deities and spirits are shamans, called *mudang* in Korea generally and *mansin*, *danggol*, or *simbang* depending on region. Traditionally, shamans have been women, although there are some male shamans. Female priests seem to have once had power in conducting rituals, including those related to kings; for example, some documents from the Samguk (Three Kingdoms) era (early fourth century to mid-seventh century) indicate that female priests conducted a ritual for the founder of a dynasty, and were influential advisors to the king (Kim Wol-Duk 2007). However, as Buddhism and Confucianism came to dominate the Goryeo (918-1392) and Joseon (1392-1910) Dynasties, their role and status became limited to shamanism, which became a private realm for women patrons (ibid.).<sup>121</sup> Nevertheless, shaman rituals have continued to play crucial roles in ceremonies for certain villages' well-being and abundance; shamans are believed to cure illness and mental stress, and to guide the spirit of a deceased person to heaven.<sup>122</sup>

Shamans in Korea fall into two categories: *gangsinmu* and *seseupmu*. *Gangsinmu* are people who have experienced *sinbyeong* (lit. spirit illness), presumably caused by spirit-

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<sup>120</sup> There are various opinions on when shamanic practices began in Korea, since there is no written record. The earliest document describing shamanic practice was written by Lee Gyubo, who lived in the twelfth century (Hwang Rusi 1988).

<sup>121</sup> As women became increasingly excluded from participation in the public sphere, shamanism became "one of the few remaining avenues for their self-realization" (Lee Yong-Shik 2004: 27).

<sup>122</sup> A shaman is a counselor and mentor as well as a religious practitioner. My mother visits a female shaman who lives in the same village whenever she feels sick, needs counseling for her stress, or makes decisions for family members.



possession, which led them to become shamans. *Seseupmu* in contrast are members of hereditary shaman families; typically, women who are born or married into those families are trained in song and dance to become *munyeo* (lit. female shaman), while men become instrumentalists. Although *seseupmu* do not necessarily experience spirit-possession like *gangsinmu*, both categories of shamans mediate between deities/spirits and human beings: the *gangsinmu* are possessed by deities/spirits through rituals; the *seseupmu* invite deities/spirits to the earth, blessing and entertaining them during rituals. Therefore, the performances of *gangsinmu* emphasize the delivery of what they, as the embodied deities/spirits, say during the ritual, whereas the performances of *seseupmu* are characterized by advanced musicianship and sophisticated artistry (Hwang Rusi 1988). A century ago, *seseupmu* spread throughout the region south of the Han River and east of the Taebaek Mountains, while *gangsinmu* were generally found north of the Han River (ibid.). This distinction, however, is no longer accurate; *gangsinmu* are now spread all over South Korea, while the numbers of *seseupmu*, in Gyeonggi, Chungcheong, and Jeolla provinces, are dwindling (ibid.).

Shaman ritual went through a process similar to *pungmul* during the colonial period and postcolonial industrialization in the twentieth century. The practice was negatively conceptualized as “superstition” by Japanese colonial authorities and Christian missionaries, and was perceived as interfering with the governmental impetus for modernization (the “Saemaeul undong”) (Hwang Rusi 1988). Thus, shamans and shaman rituals have been substantially marginalized in contemporary society, even as some shaman rituals have been designated as Important Intangible Cultural Heritages by the government. Generally, shaman rituals have become isolated from daily life, and remaining shamans survive as fortune-tellers. Even *seseupmu* sometimes work as *gangsinmu* to earn money; because it is hard to maintain shamanic

practice through the hereditary system, many *seseupmu* adopt a son or hire professional drummers to keep the tradition alive (Hwang Rusi 2008).

Percussion instruments are indispensable when shamans perform a series of rituals to invite, bless, entertain, and then send off each of many divine spirits. The instrumentation of shaman rituals varies depending on regional style and ritual size: it might consist of only percussion instruments; a combination of percussion and wind instruments; or a chamber ensemble of percussion and melodic instruments, including winds and strings. *Gangsinmu* rituals generally feature simpler instrumentation, mostly composed of percussion instruments, whereas *seseupmu* rituals such as Gyeonggi *dodanggut* (shaman rituals for the village in Gyeonggi province) and Jindo *ssitgimgut* (shaman rituals for dead spirits on Jindo Island of the southwestern region) are accompanied by wind, string, and percussion instruments.<sup>123</sup>

In *gangsinmu* rituals, women, whether shamans or not, have played percussion instruments; shamans may conduct rituals while also playing drums and gongs, while non-shamans may play instruments in certain rituals.<sup>124</sup> For example, Hwanghaedo *gut* (shaman rituals from Hwanghae province), performed by *gangsinmu*, used to be a female domain: shamans, instrument players, and patrons were generally all women. However, according to Lee Jinyeo (b. 1963), a shaman of Hwanghaedo *gut*, women are now being replaced by

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<sup>123</sup> For example, Hwanghaedo *gut*, performed by *gangsinmu* in northwestern regions, uses fewer instruments for a particular ritual than other regions: some percussion instruments—*janggu*, *jing*, *bara* (pair of brass cymbals), *ggwaenggwari*, and *buk*—including *piri* and *taepyeongso* are used for a large-scale public performance. An ensemble of *piri*, *daegeum* (transverse bamboo flute), *haegeum* (two-stringed fiddle), *janggu*, and *buk* accompanies shaman rituals in the central Seoul and Gyeonggi regions. Southwestern shaman rituals feature a fuller orchestra of *ajaeng*, *gayageum*, *daegeum*, *haegeum*, and percussion instruments (Lee Yong-Shik 2002).

<sup>124</sup> In a *seohaean pungoje* (west coast village ritual for abundant fishery) that I observed in 2001, Kim Geumhwa, a female *gangsinmu* designated as Important Intangible Cultural Heritage, performed accompanied by percussion instruments played by women, mostly shamans, trained by Kim Geumhwa. The *janggu* was played by Choi Eumjeon, a *sanghalmoeoni* (lit. high grandmother) who usually supervises the whole process of shaman rituals, from preparing food to playing *janggu*.

professionally trained male drummers. In *seseupmu* rituals, there seems to be a strict division of gender roles: women, or *munyeo*, conduct the ritual, while men play instruments. There are exceptions: *munyeo* are sometimes involved in playing *bara* (pair of cymbals) or *jing*, while in Gyeonggi *dodanggut*, male members (called *hwaraengi*) of *seseupmu* not only play instruments but also perform rituals as priests (Hwang Rusi 1988; Jeon Hyeongdae and Kim Heon-Seon 1995).<sup>125</sup>

### **Introduction to Gangneung *danogut***

Gangneung *danogut*, a shaman ritual performed by *seseupmu*, is one of the biggest and the most popular shaman rituals in the country. It is representative of the strictly divided gender roles in those shaman rituals accompanied predominantly by percussion instruments: women conduct the ritual and men play percussion instruments. Gangneung *danogut* is the shaman ritual performed in Gangneung *danoje*, the village festival held in Gangneung, Gangwon province, for several days around May 5th of the lunar calendar. Gangneung *danoje*, designated IICH No.13 by the Korean government in 1963, as well as World Heritage by UNESCO in 2005, has become the biggest festival, welcoming people from all over the country. The festival features shaman rituals, Confucian rituals, Gwanno masked theater, folk plays, masked dances, regional *pungmul* performances, and drumming competitions, as well as *nanjang*, a street market selling all kinds of merchandise. Gangneung *danogut*, a kind of Donghaean (east coast) shaman ritual, is performed by a shaman family that has handed down the shamanic practice in eastern coastal areas through five generations (Yu Kyung-Hwa 2001). The family, made up of 30-40

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<sup>125</sup> The video documentary on Gyeonggi *dodanggut* produced by the Korean government in the 1990s or early 2000 shows male as well as female shamans performing rituals. The narrator comments that *seseupmu* who perform Gyeonggi *dodanggut* are in danger of disappearing.

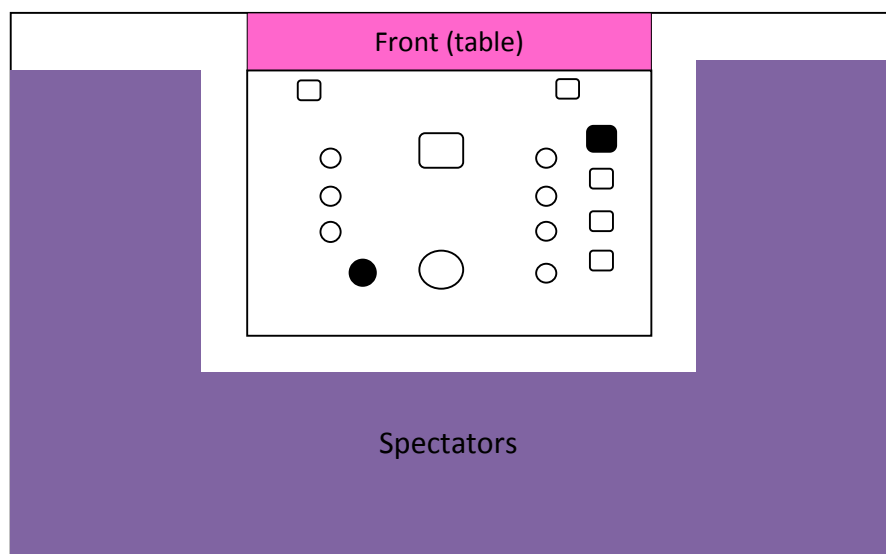
shamans and instrumentalists and divided into five sub-groups, is involved in shaman rituals throughout the eastern and southeastern coastal areas (ibid.). This shaman family is often considered to perform Donghaean shaman rituals with greater artistry and better technique than any other regional shamans (Hwang Rusi 1988). Gangneung *danogut* is led by the shaman and *boyuja* of IICH, Bin Sunae, and the leading *janggu* player, Kim Myeongdae—respectively the daughter-in-law of and the youngest son of the legendary shaman Shin Seoknam.



**Figure VI-5:** A scene of the shaman ritual hall of Gangneung *danogut*

Gangneung *danogut* begins around 11 a.m. right after a Confucian ritual (exclusively performed by male elders), and lasts until approximately 7-8 p.m. There are five to ten shaman rituals performed during the day, each lasting one to three hours. The shaman ritual hall (see Figure VI-5 and VI-6), decorated with paper flowers and a lamp, features a long table of *sinmok*

(lit. spirit tree) and food in front;<sup>126</sup> shaman rituals are performed in the center, surrounded by spectators who are generally elderly women and sometimes include tourists, students, and scholars. Figure VI-6 shows the configuration of the shaman ritual hall: a *munyeo* (large square) conducting a ritual stands facing the *janggu* player (large circle); the *jing* player (black circle) sits at the left side of the *janggu* player; the *soe* players (small circles) sit on each side; and *munyeo* apprentices (small squares) sit behind the *soe* players. Another *munyeo* (black square) sometimes sings *gueum* (meaningless vocals) when the first *munyeo* dances. In the middle of shaman rituals, spectators or patrons make wishes for their family, consulting with shamans who are not performing a ritual.



**Figure VI-6:** The configuration of the shaman ritual hall

<sup>126</sup> The Confucians and shamans perform rituals for the mountain deity (General Kim Yusin) and the primary deity (Guksa seonghwangsin) of Gangneung *danogut* at shrines located in Mt. Daegwallyeong, Gangneung, on April 15th by the lunar calendar. Shamans get the *sinmok*—possessed with the spirits of the deities through the ritual—and take them to the shrine for the female partner (Guksa yeoseonghwangsin) of the primary deity. Then all deities, in forms of tablets and *sinmok*, are moved to the ritual hall on May 3rd (Gangneung *Danoje* Festival Committee, available at <http://www.danojefestival.or.kr/contents.asp?page=149>, accessed on April 21, 2013).

Each shaman ritual begins when the instrumentalists—one *janggu*, one *jing*, and several *soe* players—play loudly and a *munyeo* dances to invite the deities into the hall. When the *munyeo* sings *saseol* (narrative or lyrics) to bless and entertain the deities, only the *janggu* and the *jing* players accompany her; the *janggu* player sings *gueum* whenever the *saseol* phrase ends. After one section of *saseol* ends, the *munyeo* dances and the *soe* players join in playing their instruments. This pattern repeats until the whole *saseol* ends, and then the *munyeo* dances while another *munyeo* sings *gueum* and all the instrumentalists play their instruments.

### **Divided Gender Roles in Gangneong *Danogut***

In Gangneung *danogut*, as in other shaman rituals performed by *seseupmu*, men and women play distinctive gender roles: women (called *jimo* or *mudang gaksi*) play the role of shaman, conducting the shaman ritual by singing and dancing; men (called *yangjung*) generally play *janggu*, *jing*, *ggwaenggwari*, and sometimes *taepyeongso*. While the main role of the *yangjung* is to play instruments for the ritual, the person who plays *janggu*, usually the shaman's husband, also sings *gueum* or part of the shaman's lyrics, encourages the shaman's singing with *chuimsae*, and prompts the shaman if she forgets the lyrics (Hwang Rusi 1988).<sup>127</sup> In addition, the *yangjung* sometimes conducts a small ritual as a shaman and manages the ritual schedule (Hwang Rusi 2008). That women do not play instruments within shaman rituals performed by *seseupmu* is assumed; however, according to Kim Myeongdae, women who have decided to be a *munyeo* learn *jing* as a way of practicing rhythmic phrases before learning lyrics or narratives. Bin Sunae also informed me that she has played *janggu* when she teaches songs to

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<sup>127</sup> An unmarried *yangjung* tends to play *soe* and *jing*, but when he gets married and his wife performs shaman ritual he will play *janggu* for her (Hwang Rusi 1988).

her students. Nevertheless, Bin Sunae and Kim Myeongdae agreed that women have not played *janggu* in their family's shaman rituals, and that it would be impossible for women to play *janggu* in those rituals.



**Figure VI-7:** Bin Sunae (left arrow) and Kim Myeongdae (right arrow), performing “Simcheonggut” in Gangneung *danoje*

“No *janggu* [for women]! Women can’t [*janggu*]...Our *janggu* [technique or pattern] is not easy at all. Since [the *janggu* player] needs to lead a shaman ritual for a couple of hours, playing complicated rhythmic patterns, it can’t be a role for women” (Kim Myeongdae 8/25/11). Such was Kim Myeongdae’s first reaction to my question of whether women play *janggu* in his family’s shaman rituals. He considered the eastern shamanic music practiced by his family to have the highest level of difficulty, with its complicated rhythmic patterns and continuous variations and improvisation, and believed that women could not master those features. In

addition, he did not accept that women would have the “endurance” and “physical power” to play drums for at least two to three hours, the standard length of a shaman ritual. Citing the conception that the *janggu* player controls the shaman, in that “the shaman cannot move from the first to the second movement without his approval,” he emphasized the role of the *janggu* player as the leader of shaman rituals, which in turn implies that he does not think women can be artistic leaders. Kim Myeongdae believed that leading Donghaean shaman rituals would require the skill to perform complicated rhythmic patterns and improvisation, the physical ability to sit and play for a long time, and the leadership of controlling the performers—and thus that the *janggu* players must be men. That is, he rationalized the practice of excluding women from drumming in his family’s shaman rituals by espousing male superiority in musical, physical, and mental terms.

When I asked whether he might allow his outstanding female students to play *janggu* in the context of shaman ritual, Kim Myeongdae still objected, with the reasoning that for a woman to play *janggu* in his shaman rituals would be “to disobey the law of nature”:

No way. We cannot disobey *cheollyun* [lit. ethics of the heaven; usually interpreted as the moral laws of family relationships; here the law of nature]. We came to allow women to learn drumming—which was the taboo before—and play it as a *samulnori* form. It is impossible for women to play *janggu* and *ggwaenggwari* in my family’s shaman ritual practice. (Kim Myeongdae 8/25/11)

It seemed to him that to have female *janggu* players in his family’s shaman practice would strain the order of nature. Interestingly, however, according to him, it was a female *gangsinmu*—who also played *janggu*—that first got his family involved in shamanic practice. He recounted the story of his great-grandfather Kim Cheondeuk, who introduced shamanic practice to his family:

I am the fourth generation of his shaman family. The great-grandfather who started *gut* [shaman ritual] was *jinsa*, a person who has passed only the first examination for a governmental officer. This is what I heard: he was attracted to a pretty girl who was a shaman and played *janggu*. He eventually took her as a second wife. He was practicing



[drumming] in private places such as *seonangdang* [shrine worshiped for shamanic deities] since he, as *yangban*, felt ashamed to practice it in the public sphere. In conclusion, the one who made our family learn *janggu* at first was a woman, or *gangsinnmu*. (Kim Myeongdae 8/25/11)

In this way, his family learned shamanic songs and rhythms from a *gangsinnmu*, although Kim Myeongdae noted that, now, *gangsinnmu* came to learn shamanic music from his family. He doubted that the shaman who influenced his great-grandfather had an excellent *janggu* player. Instead, he believed that his great-grandfather might have created something “good,” and then it was transmitted to the next generation who must have developed it further.<sup>128</sup> His belief that it was men who created and developed eastern shamanic drumming in its complicated and sophisticated form also manifests his conception of male superiority, which further rationalizes his family’s practice that women cannot play *janggu*.

This account of his family’s genealogy in relation to shamanic practice implies that the great-grandfather, before getting involved in shamanic practice, was *jinsa*, a member of the literate class, who would have been knowledgeable enough about Confucian scriptures to take the exam for a governmental officer. Assigning different gender roles to men and women in his family’s shaman ritual context may reflect the different gender roles of men and women in his family, which might have been influenced by Confucian ideology.

Kim Myeongdae’s gender conceptions are apparent in his musical practices; he has used different teaching strategies for his students based on their gender, taking it for granted that men and women are inherently different. He has asked female students to play *janggu* more “wildly” and “toughly,” whereas he has told male students to play more “gracefully.” He explained:

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<sup>128</sup> He continued that he “consolidated what my older generation—excellent drummers such as Kim Seokchul, Song Dongsuk and Kim Yongtaek—learned from their older generation.” He thinks that succeeding generations accumulate and continue the best work of the older generations.

*Eum* and *yang* should be considered when dealing with instruments. When playing *janggu*, a man should consider it as if it were a woman. If he plays it “wildly,” the beauty won’t be expressed... If men are excited, they cannot control their power and speed... In contrast, I usually ask women to play *janggu* as if beating their bad boyfriend. Women have a beautiful line but do not have strong power. That’s why I ask them to play wildly. Then, it will make *eum* and *yang* balanced. (Kim Myeongdae 8/25/11)

In this way, he has trained female students to cultivate what he sees as “masculine” power and male students to develop a more “feminine” sensibility. This method of balancing the energy of *eum* and *yang* likewise seems to demonstrate his internalization of stereotyped gender differences: what men and women are supposed to be and do.

### **Women’s Negotiation with the Gendered Norm**

Nevertheless, there have been women who learned eastern shamanic drumming from Kim Myeongdae. The unique rhythmic patterns of Donghaean shamanic drumming—“more sophisticated and complicated subdivisions of rhythmic patterns” (Yu Kyung-Hwa 2001: 2)—have attracted many drumming students as well as professional drummers. Yu Kyung-Hwa, one of Kim Myeongdae’s first female students, was exposed to, fascinated by, and attracted to eastern shamanic drumming during fieldwork in 1988, when she was a junior in college. She started learning it by observing his family’s ritual practice for one year. Later she wrote a master’s thesis on the drumming patterns of Donghaean shaman rituals, and in 2002 performed her own compositions incorporating those rhythmic patterns. She has never played *janggu* in the context of shaman ritual, however, and has not dared even to pursue such performance.

As of 2011, three young women students in their twenties had been involved in Kim Myeongdae's shaman practice for about ten years.<sup>129</sup> They were members of a high school *samulnori* group led by Kim Unseok, a student and official “adopted son” of Kim Myeongdae.<sup>130</sup> Kim Unseok has played percussion instruments including *janggu*, and the other male members of the *samulnori* group have played percussion instruments excluding *janggu* in shaman rituals; the female members have played the role of the *munyeo* in rituals.<sup>131</sup> These female apprentices learned percussion, but were not training to be drummers for shaman rituals; having decided to become *munyeo* apprentices in 2007, they have sometimes played *jing* and *soe* in limited circumstances, although women are not supposed to play instruments in a ritual context; at Gangneung *danogut* in 2011, I observed that they sometimes played *soe* when men took a break from performing.

However, these female apprentices have been playing percussion instruments regularly in concert settings, at least once or twice a month, as members of Daegwallyeong Puneori, which was founded by Kim Myeongdae in 1986. Puneori performs “staged” eastern shamanic music, including *musok samulnori* (lit. shamanic *samulnori*), which is rearranged shamanic drumming based on Donghaean shaman rituals—just as *samulnori* was based on rearranged rhythmic patterns from regional *pungmul* performances. Though they have been able to play percussion instruments in non-ritual settings, these women have still been limited in their playing. The

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<sup>129</sup> There were three young women, when I was doing the fieldwork in 2011, but when I contacted the *munyeo* apprentice Im Seonmi in 2013 I found that one of them had ceased all performance activities due to a health problem.

<sup>130</sup> There were six girls and six boys in the *samulnori* group.

<sup>131</sup> The *munyeo* in contemporary context are trained to perform shaman rituals and thus do not necessarily have the same supernatural abilities ascribed to *gangsinmu* experiencing spirit-possession.

*munyeo* apprentice Im Seonmi recalled that she had more opportunities to play with Kim Myeongdae when male members were gone for military service:

I practiced a lot because I didn't wish to harm his performance. Also I practiced toughly and wildly to perform as well as men. (Im Seonmi 8/26/11)

She added that she practiced tenaciously because women could not “beat” men in terms of physical power and speed. Nevertheless, female apprentices more often play the role of *munyeo* than instrumentalist in concert settings.



**Figure VI-8:** The presentation of Gangneung *danogut* in a concert setting

As *munyeo* apprentices, the women members have been learning and performing shaman's songs, narratives, and dances. Im Seonmi recalled that it was at a special workshop on shamanic music in 2007 that they happened to learn the *munyeo*'s repertoires, although that was neither their own intention nor anyone else's aim. They came to perform as *munyeo* at Gangneung *Danogut* the same year. The shift from percussionist to *munyeo* seemed to work for

Im Seonmi, as she became the main attraction for spectators when she performed a shaman ritual as a *munyeo*. This contrasts with her experience as a percussionist: she received little attention when playing *samulnori* with male members, because her senior male colleagues gave outstanding performances. Nevertheless, when I asked her, “If you were allowed to play drums in shaman rituals, would you keep playing drums or switch to the role of *munyeo*?,” she responded “Probably I would not learn the songs and dance of *munyeo*.” This suggests that she was driven to change her career to survive in a field where gender roles are strictly prescribed, even though she started learning shamanic performance practices out of an interest in drumming. Im Seonmi planned to continue singing and dancing as a “shaman” out of a sense of duty to preserve the Important Intangible Cultural Heritage, although she has sometimes gotten negative feedback on what she does in shaman rituals:

I experience prejudice as a shaman. My family members do not object to my performing as a *munyeo*. They are aware that it is a role of the initiate who learns Intangible Cultural Heritage, whereas some are confused between my role as *munyeo* and a real shaman. (Im Seonmi 8/26/11)

There seems to be a paradox for these three women in that their new career path is both negatively viewed by their peers due to its relationship to shamanism, and not well received by scholars due to their lack of religious devotion in shamanism (Hwang Rusi 2008).

Shin Heera, who is married to Kim Myeongdae, has also been training to become a *munyeo*. She was a leading *janggu* player in a *pungmul* group in high school and then majored in wind instruments (*piri* and *taepyeongso*) in college; she was exposed to eastern shamanic drumming in 2004, and connected with an eastern shaman family in 2007. She shared with me her experience of participating as a *taepyeongso* player at Gangneung *danogut* in 2007:

When I played *taepyeongso* in the shamanic field, I heard some disrespectful statements about me. This is partly because I, as a woman, played *taepyeongso*, which is a male instrument. Even scholars did not look at me positively; one scholar emphasized that I

should not wear male *hanbok* when I played *taepyeongso*...Since then, I wore female *hanbok*. (Shin Heera 8/26/11)

When she first played *taepyeongso* in the shaman ritual, where only the *munyeo* wears female *hanbok*, Shin Heera chose to wear male *hanbok* as other instrumentalists did. After objections from a scholar and her husband, she began to wear female *hanbok* when she played *taepyeongso*. But this did not last long either, as she started performing shaman rituals as a *munyeo* in 2008. She emphasized that this followed what the circumstance directed, in that she wanted to support her husband, the best *janggu* player, by becoming his partner in the shaman ritual context.<sup>132</sup> She has been performing rituals as a *munyeo* for five years; she acknowledged that she has been well-treated because she is Kim Myeongdae's wife.

Both Im Seonmi and Shin Heera, who initiated their careers as drummers, have become *munyeo* as a way of surviving in the gendered environment of Gangneung *danogut* practice. To be involved in this shaman ritual practice, Im Seonmi conformed to the naturalized women's role; Shin Heera initially resisted to the extent of playing *taepyeongso* in shaman rituals, but ultimately followed the standard role assigned to the wife of the *janggu* player.

## Gender Reversal

On August 25-26, 2011, a workshop was held for a Gangneung *danogut* preservation society at a campsite on the mountain in Gangneung. Even though it was not a ritual context, it presented the gendered shamanic practice naturalized in that community. This workshop, intended to help those involved in Gangneung *danogut* improve their artistic skills and knowledge of shamanism, was made up of lectures by a couple of scholars specializing in

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<sup>132</sup> Usually, the shaman family finds a wife for their son when he is a teenager and then trains whomever he marries as a *munyeo*.

shamanism and sessions in which *boyuja* or assistant trainers taught apprentices singing, dancing, and drumming. There were four to five shamans, including the *boyuja* Bin Sunae, three *munyeo* apprentices, Kim Myeongdae, and several male apprentices. The training sessions were sometimes held separately—the training of *munyeo* was led by Bin Sunae and that of drumming by Kim Myeongdae—and sometimes together. When they had separate sessions, men practiced playing *janggu* in one room and women practiced dancing and singing in the other. The exceptions were me, who watched and sometimes videotaped the training scene, and one female *yeonhui*-major college student, a friend of Kim Unseok, who came to learn the repertoire of shamanic song. This gender division was also apparent when we ate: in the dining room, men were seated at one of the long tables and women at the other. This arrangement might have been influenced by the separation of sleeping places for women and men; since women slept in the big room together, they tended to move together. Im Seonmi saw this as a coincidence, saying that the gap between teachers and apprentices reflected the apprentices' admiration for their teachers. However, this explanation was less convincing when it occurred at almost every meal.

On the second day, there was a session in which the participants practiced together. Kim Myeongdae was in town, but he rejoined us a couple of hours later; while he was absent, the *janggu* was played by Kim Unseok. At some point, Bin Sunae let two male apprentices—professional drummers already involved in *pungmul* or *samulnori*—play *janggu* for the senior *munyeo* as a way of practicing. This was the first time either had played solo *janggu* for *munyeo*, even in rehearsal. Bin Sunae, sitting right near them, actively encouraged them by tapping on the *janggu* players' back or the floor with her hands, clapping her hands, or playing

*ggwaenggwari*. The *munyeo* who were singing or watching, including Bin Sunae, then gave feedback on their *janggu* skills.

Afterwards, while they were chatting, Bin Sunae talked about how well she can play the Cheongbo *jangdan*, one of the important eastern shamanic drumming patterns. Right away, she moved to sit in front of the *janggu* so as to demonstrate it and then asked the other women to play their instruments together. Bin Sunae held the *janggu* sticks, the three female apprentices *soe*, and Shin Heera *jing*. Bin Sunae called Kim Unseok first to sing for them, but he declined; he later confessed that he did due to embarrassment over performing as a *munyeo* since he was an instrumentalist. Another male apprentice, Kim Ilhyeon, was brought up instead. He looked shy and had a smile on his face, but once he stood in front of them, he bowed and began to sing. Since he did not seem to know the lyrics perfectly, the female apprentices assisted his singing, and eventually Shin Heera gave him her lyrics sheet. He also danced when the shaman was supposed to dance, and one of the male apprentices sang *gueum*. Kim Ilhyeon did not stop smiling while performing, and most of the women—those playing instruments, the two other senior *munyeo* watching the performance, and myself—were laughing at his performance; I could not see the other men's responses because they were sitting or standing behind me. The female apprentices seemed to enjoy doing what they were usually not allowed to do; the senior *munyeo* seemed to be entertained by a male apprentice clumsily imitating what they usually do. Kim Ilhyeon (5/18/13) shared with me later that he had been interested in the *munyeo*'s lyrics and had practiced them, since an ideal *yangjung* should know them. He thought it would be a good chance to practice in front of the *munyeo* and wanted to give a good impression.





**Figures VI-9 &10:** Women play instruments and a male apprentice plays the role of *munyeo* at the workshop

Even though Bin Sunae played the basic skeleton of the rhythmic patterns rather than the complicated, decorative rhythms that Kim Myeongdae and his male apprentices play, the female apprentices showed the same performance skills on *ggwaenggwari* as men did. After it ended, Bin Sunae said, “It is not my major, but I can imitate. Guys, you should be aware that women without men can [play instruments].” I was told later that this was a rare case: Shin Heera had seen photos of women playing instruments in shaman ritual about ten years ago, a “surprise

event.” The absence of Kim Myeongdae might have influenced the way Bin Sunae was not only teaching and mentoring male apprentices, but also calling on the women to drum despite the normal practice.

Bin Sunae took an opportunity to play when it arose. This was in large part to show off her skills, and to allow other women to play; however, that it would not have happened if Kim Myeongdae was present shows how even the simplest efforts to participate do, in a way, challenge gender roles. Bin Sunae did make a point of mentioning that this was something women could do too. Yet she did not encourage other participants to consider the event “normal,” something that could and should be repeated. The challenge, therefore, is inherent in participation, but not a direct confrontation criticizing gender roles and divisions in her shaman family’s practice.

It was very exciting for me to observe this event, particularly because I would not have expected it to occur based on their earlier statements. Clearly, women would play drums if the practice allowed for it.

## **Conclusion**

There are significant parallels between the *pansori* and Gangneung *danogut* cases. Both genres are characterized by important drum accompaniment, the playing of which is dominated by men. The discourse that normalizes the practice of assigning drumming to maleness, and vice versa, correspondingly naturalizes the practice of excluding women from drumming. As both *pansori* and Gangneung *danogu* were designated as the ICHs by the government in the late twentieth century, the gender division of female singers versus male drummers was codified and has remained self-reinforcing. Thus, this conception of the gender division, naturalized and

formulated as “tradition,” may be very difficult to break, or even move beyond, even if some women have been challenging this gendered norm. Based on my interactions with those involved in *pansori* and Gangneung *danogut*, it seems to be more difficult for women to play drums in Gangneung *danogut* than in *pansori*. However, the next generation after Kim Myungdae who are not hereditary shamans may open a door to women in the figure where they become primary performers.

## Chapter VII: Conclusion

In the introduction, I posed three main questions: What kind of sociocultural environment encourages women's involvement in Korean drumming? How has drumming been historically constructed as male, and to what extent does this naturalize drummers as male and exclude women? And, how do women drummers negotiate between expressing the "masculinity" central to drumming culture and performing qualities typically categorized as "feminine," particularly considering that both masculinity and femininity are influenced by such historical structures as Confucianism, nationalism, and commercialization? To address these, I have first traced what prompted women to participate in Korean drumming, focusing on the women's professional drumming groups (*yeoseong nongakdan*) that emerged in the late 1950s - 1970s, as well as the expansion of women's participation since the 1990s in many places and genres, whether amateur or professional. The emergence of *yeoseong nongakdan* was possible due to women's expansion in professional music in the early twentieth century, as well as the increased practice of drumming as entertainment, even as it waned in village and labor contexts. Contemporary women's involvement can be traced to governmental support for traditional music, intellectuals' awareness of folk culture, and *samulnori*'s popularity throughout the 1970s-1980s, all of which increased the general public's interest in drumming. This culminated in widespread participation in learning and practicing drumming within educational institutes. As women's participation in the public sphere and education has increased, their participation in such programs has increased as well, through schooling (from kindergarten to colleges for married women), Intangible Cultural Heritage preservation centers, *gugak* centers, cultural centers, and private drumming organizations.

I have also examined how drumming has been historically constructed as male, and to what extent this naturalizes drummers as male and excludes women. *Pungmul* was predominantly performed by men until the mid-twentieth century, generally because the village rituals and agricultural collaboration system that drumming accompanied were men's realms. Percussion instruments in general have been perceived as associated with "yang" and thus "strength," both invoking and reinforcing a supposition that women cannot physically handle the demands of drumming. The hegemonic military culture of late twentieth-century Korea influenced other male-dominant organizations as well, furthering the construction of the drumming field as "masculine"—aggressive, male-centered, and characterized by the hierarchical and domineering atmosphere of military discipline. Furthermore, *samulnori* performance with an emphasis with "power" and "speed" appealed to contemporary audiences, and was thus pursued by subsequent generations of drummers. These "masculine" qualities in the performance and organizational culture seemed to still be dominant and self-perpetuating in the drumming field, even if organizational culture has been changing following Korean culture's current emphasis on gender equality.

What is considered "masculine" has been constructed variably depending on the genre. While "masculine" qualities in *pungmul* are often related specifically to *buk* performance and the acrobatic movement *jaban dwijipgi*—both believed to require implicitly "masculine" physicality and muscular power—they emerge in *pansori* as low and thick *chuimsae*, "dignity," and powerful drumming, and in Gangneung *danogut* as performing complicated rhythms, demanding physicality, and the leadership role of the *janggu* player. In *pansori* and Gangneung-based shaman rituals, where women remain virtually excluded from drumming roles, the discourse that normalizes the practice of assigning drumming to maleness, and vice versa, correspondingly

naturalizes the practice of excluding women from drumming. The performers in these fields often rationalize the necessity that drummers be men by attaching “masculine” characteristics to an already “masculinized” practice. That is, they construct an idealized drummer based on a maleness perceived as both defining and inherent. This naturalization in turn “denaturalizes” women as drummers.

Finally, I have examined how women drummers negotiate between expressing the “masculinity” central to drumming culture and performing “feminine” qualities. Women engaging with the practice must negotiate the drumming space by creating their own sense of identity fundamentally in opposition to, but also engaging with, the “masculinity” of that practice. They often do so by becoming “masculinized,” in that they do the same performance, exercise, and activities as men, including carrying baggage and instruments; or by adopting actions and attitudes typically associated with men, such as being aggressive and domineering, and sometimes being less concerned about appearing “feminine” in their physical appearance. Nevertheless, this process of “masculinization” works in tandem with the expectation that these women perform “female” roles to some degree within the community.

At the same time, they have pursued “femininity” as a way of differentiating themselves from male drummers in the field. Most women and women’s groups have pursued at least some strategies of emphasizing “feminine” qualities: developing dancing and/or singing skills; paying close attention to appearance through clothing and make-up; and concentrating on delicacy. Often, younger generations of women performers present themselves as sexualized, on the model of pop-culture performers. Strategies emphasizing “femininity” and “sexuality” can be seen as resisting the dominant “masculine” style performed by the majority of drumming groups. Equally, however, such resistance exposes how that “masculinity” has influenced the

way these women engage with what “looks feminine.” The “feminine” qualities they pursue seem to be a kind of essentialized form of what women are supposed to do and be, as stereotypically represented in the media, where women are commodified and objectified for the “interests and desires of men” (Connell 1987). Such reinforcement of “femininity” as imagined and idealized by men is also an “accommodation,” in that it conforms to a male-centered gender ideology. Women performers in the drumming field are thus driven to not only adopt the “masculine” practices and culture of the field, but simultaneously seek strategies of emphasizing “femininity” and sexuality—which themselves reinforce the male-centric foundation—in order to survive.

Throughout the discussion of “masculinity” and “femininity,” the female body emerges as the focus. It is not simply the physiological body: women’s bodies in the drumming field can be considered from the perspective of physicality, reproduction, and beauty. First, women’s body is not simply what makes it possible to perform drumming, but an instrument requiring adjustment to perform the physicality required in drumming. Women drummers work hard to make their bodies capable of performing certain activities or movements considered “masculine.” From this perspective, a women’s body is the medium through which they challenge the “masculinity” of drumming practices. Second, women’s bodies are seen as vehicles for reproduction, and when a woman chooses to have children, the physical demands of pregnancy and childbirth often prevent her from performing. Furthermore, the aftermath changes the body in ways that may impact performance; women who bear children have to recondition their bodies in order to perform on stage as before. In addition, women often experience constraints in their performance activities because of childcare responsibilities. It seems that childbirth presents an obstacle to women drummers’ ability to perform and make a

career in drumming; some are afraid of having children if they seek a drumming career, although others say the experience enhances their music-making. Third, women's bodies represent the gendered norm of "beauty." Women drummers' strategies of "feminizing" and sexualizing their bodies may be seen as subverting the assumption that "masculinity" is essential to the drumming field, even as they conform to stereotypical gendered practice. These three perspectives on women's bodies correlate with one another to some extent; for example, childbearing not only affects the ability to perform physically demanding actions, but also disrupts the beauty of an "idealized" female body.

Women's bodies in the drumming field thus become a site where gendered practices are mediated, a process that entails challenging the perception of physicality in drumming as "masculine," dealing with the obstacles stemming from childbearing, and accommodating gendered norms of beauty. Women drummers are constantly negotiating between resistance and conformity, forcing their way into the "masculine" practice of drumming yet maintaining their place there by reinforcing stereotypical "feminine" qualities. This situation of women's bodies may be applicable to other male-dominated realms of Korean society. Particularly, the "feminization" strategies taken by some women drummers and drumming groups reflect the Korean preoccupation with taking care of appearance. Women—and increasingly men—in contemporary Korea are subject to an idealized, standardized image of beauty concocted and commodified by industry and the media (Song Myeonghee 2007). Idealized "attractiveness" is necessary to sell oneself, whether in the job or marriage market; achieving unrealistic ideals of beauty is thus essential to "succeeding" in life. For women in particular, this entails submitting their bodies to constant "bettering." There is agency in the way they choose to sell themselves, but the terms of sale have been predetermined by larger cultural and capitalist structures. It is



hypocritical to criticize how individuals attempt to survive in an environment not of their making, even as it is crucial to criticize the environment itself. Women drummers who pursue “feminization” strategies are trying to make the best out of what they have to work with. They are proactively challenging the structures purely by continuing to survive within them.

Some Korean music scholars and drummers question why I approach drumming from a gender perspective; what does Korean drumming have to do with gender? Even though it is often said that women in Korea have now achieved equal rights to men, this is no more true in Korea than anywhere else in the world. Patriarchal gender ideologies continue to control the culture; people are still expected to follow gendered norms, whether conforming to or challenging them. For example, once women get married, they are to perform the expected traditional women’s role within their husband’s family, even if spousal relationships have become slightly more equitable.<sup>133</sup> I did not come to this project identifying as a feminist or an activist, but this is hugely affected by my family environment: my father was the most important member of the family in terms of making decisions for any matters; and my mother believes that, had she had a son, she would have enjoyed more respect within both the larger familial structure and the community at large. I thoroughly acknowledged the “unfairness” regarding this patriarchal system. However, the purpose of this dissertation is not to criticize the system per se, nor to highlight the dark side of Korean society in terms of gender ideology. Rather, I am presenting the stories of women drummers, focusing on the reality of their experiences. My eventual approach to the field of Korean drumming—as a realm that not only represents gender

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<sup>133</sup> Women are more involved in economic activities: for women between ages 15-64, 55.6% are employed (compared to 77.6% of men), as of 2013 (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family 2014). However, 20.3 % (1,978,000) of married women 15-54 years old quit their jobs because of marriage (46.9%), childcare (24.9%), and childbirth (24.2%), as of 2012 (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family & Statistics Korea 2013). Both spouses work in 43.5% of households as of 2012 (ibid.).

conceptions of Korean society but also reinforces and challenges them through its gendered practice—has emerged from my pilot study on the presence and survival of women in that field. I have thus sought to demonstrate the gender ideologies constructed in Korean society and the gender conceptions internalized by contemporary Koreans as a necessary context for understanding how these women exist and survive in the field.

I had originally intended to examine both the professional and amateur drumming realms, but I ended up focusing on contemporary drummers in the professional realm, most of whom were or are Seoul-based performers who studied drumming in college. Therefore, this study lacks significant perspective from amateur performers, drummers who are primarily educators, non-Seoul based performers, performers who are primarily dancers but also play drums, those involved in regional *pungmul*, and drummers who work predominantly as accompanists. These offer potential areas for further studies; in particular, amateur drumming groups, including married women's groups, are ripe for examination in the broader contexts of building identities and communities.

I hope that investigating the increasing presence of women in a historically male musical domain thus provides a broader perspective on music and gender in Korean music. I also hope that applying the Western theoretical approaches of gender studies to Korean scholarship, and presenting the analytic views of Korean scholars to Western scholars encourage an ethnographic praxis that avoids prioritization of a particular—usually outsider—conceptual framework. This research may shed light on similar processes both in historical male realms of other regions and in capitalist societies emphasizing “femininity” within consumer culture.

## Appendix I: Glossary

*The Glossary contains Korean words used twice or more in this dissertation, as well as some particularly significant terms. Syllabic pronunciation is indicated in square brackets.*

*Ajaeng*: seven-stringed bowed zither

*Bara*: pair of cymbals

*Beoggu*: a little bigger than *sogo* (a generic term for small drum)

*Beopgo*: large barrel drum used to be played at Buddhist temples

*Boyuja*: “holders” of art associated with Intangible Cultural Heritages; often called “human treasures”

*Buk*: barrel drum

*Bupo*: large, white feathery ornaments, symbolizing a flower, which is attached to the *sangmo* of *soe* players in the southwestern region

*Changgeuk* [*chang-geuk*]: a modernized version of *pansori* adapted for stage performance

*Changjak* (lit. composition): new compositions

*changjak gugak*: new *gugak* compositions

*changjak taak*: new *taak* compositions

*changjak pansori*: new *pansori* compositions

*Cheolhyeongeum*: lit. metal string zither

*Chuimsae* [*chu-im-sae*]: vocal interjections, e.g. “*eo*lssigu” (an exclamation of encouragement), “*jotta*” (lit. great), “*jalhanda*” (lit. good job)

*Dangsan*: shrine or tree in which the village’s protective deities are believed to be located

*Dure*: farmers’ communal labor system

*Eumak*: music

*Gangsinmu*: shamans by spirit-possession

*Gugak gangsa pulje*: lit. pool system for instructors of traditional music. Specialists such as *gugak* graduates, *gugak* performers with more than ten years experience, and those trained in Intangible Cultural Heritages regularly teach traditional music as part-time instructors in elementary, middle, and high schools through *gangsa pulje*.

*Gayageum*: twelve-string plucked zither

*Gayageum byeongchang*: singing while accompanying oneself on the *gayageum*

*Geollip*: similar to *jisin balpgi*, but oriented more toward monetary profit

*Geomungo* [*geo-mun-go*]: six-stringed zither plucked with a stick

*Ggwaenggwari* [*ggwaeng-gwa-ri*]: small gong; often called *soe*

*Gi*: energy or vitality; sometimes used in a negative way, to indicate overpowering energy

*Giun*: similar to *gi*

*giga seda*: lit. “energy is strong”; more accurately, “vitality is strong”

*Gisaeng*: courtesans who entertained men by singing, dancing, and playing instruments

*Gobeop*: drumming as accompaniment in *pansori*; it can also refer to any solo drum accompaniment in other performing genres.

*Gongnyeok*: the energy that emerges after a long period of training; originated from the Buddhist term referring Buddhist merit acquired by practicing austerities

*Gosu*: drummer in *pansori*

*Gueum* [*gu-eum*]: meaningless vocals

*Gugak*: lit. national music; used more to indicate traditional music

*Gungi* [*Gun-gi*]: military discipline (lit. military energy)

*Gungiga ganghada*: lit. “military energy is strong”; more accurately, “military discipline is strong”

*Gut*: shaman ritual

*Gwangdae*: *pansori* singers, or entertainers in general

*Hanbok*: traditional clothing, generally from the Joseon Dynasty

*Heung*: excitement/enthusiasm

*Jaban dwijipgi* (lit. jaban flipping): acrobatic movement of rotating counterclockwise while jumping, with the head toward the center of the circle and the back almost parallel to the ground

*Jangdan* (lit. long and short): rhythmic patterns

*Jangu* [*jang-gu*] (also called *janggo*): hourglass-shaped drum

*Janggu chum*: *janggu* dance originating from what *gisaeng* danced with *janggu*

*Jeontong*: tradition

*Jing*: big gong

*Jisin balpgi*: village ritual in which performers visit each house, while playing percussion, to bestow/call for good luck

*Jjaksoe*: duet *soe*

*Jongmyo jeryeak*: royal ancestral ritual and music at Jongmyo Shrine

*Minyo*: folk songs

*Modeumbuk*: modified drum-set made up of different-sized barrel drums

*Mudong*: lit. dancing child

*Muhyeong munhwajae*: Important Intangible Cultural Heritages (IICH)

*Mudang*: shamans in Korea; also called *mansin*, *danggol* [*dang-gol*], or *simbang*

*Munhwa*: culture

*Munyeo* (lit. female shaman): women who are born or married into hereditary shaman families and thus are trained in song and dance

*Namsadang* (lit. male *sadang*): itinerant entertainment troupe performing a repertoire of drumming and dancing, bowl spinning, acrobatics, tightrope walking, masked performance, and puppetry

*Nongak* [nong-ak] (lit. farmer's music): regional *pungmul*

*Nori* (lit. play): folk play/game in the context of IICH; in the context of *pungmul*, refers to a performance demonstrating the highest quality technique and artistry possible with an instrument, centering on the lead player of an instrument, or a group of those players (e.g. *sangsoe nori*, *seoljanggu nori*, *beoggu nori*, *mudong nori*, etc.)

*Pangut*: a *pungmul* repertoire for entertainment, usually performed in standing position; there is a *samulnori* version of *pangut* called *samulnori pangut*.

*Pansori*: theatrical play of story-telling and singing

*Piri*: double-reed instrument

*Pungmul*: percussion ensemble practice in the village context

*Sadang*: the oldest itinerant entertainment troupe in the Joseon Dynasty, mostly made up of women and typically performing folk songs and dancing with *beoggu*. They sold talismans given out by the Buddhist temple during performances, and gave a part of their earnings back to the temple

*Saemaoul* [sae-ma-eul] *undong*: lit. New Village Movement. The Korean government in the early 1970s pursued modernization and economic wealth as well as a “change of the citizen’s value-system,” driven by the belief that Western and modern culture based on rationality and science was superior to traditional Korean culture

*Samguk* (lit. Three Kingdoms) era: early fourth century to mid-seventh century, during which the kingdoms of Goguryeo, Baekje and Silla were all active in the Korean peninsula

*Samulnori* (lit. four instrument play): a modernized version of *pungmul*; usually a form of percussion quartets

*Samgomu* [sam-go-mu]/ *ogomu* [o-go-mu] (lit. three/five drum dance): drum dance originating from what monks played with *beopgo* in Buddhist temples

*Sangmo*: spinning-tasseled hat

*Chae-sangmo*: *sangmo* attaching a white ribbon—sometimes shorter than a meter, sometimes longer than two meters

*Ggot-sangmo*: conical hat decorated with paper flowers

*Bupo-sangmo*: *sangmo* with *bupo*

*Sangsoe*: leading *soe* player

*Sanjo*: improvisation-based instrumental solo with drum accompaniment

*Saseol*: narrative or lyrics

*Seoljanggu*: *janggu* performance incorporating dance movement; in the *pungmul* context, a leading *janggu* player shows off rhythmic technique and dance skill in *seoljanggu* performance during individual *nori* sessions

*Seonban*: playing *pungmul* in standing position, wearing *sangmo*

*Seonbi*: man of the literati in the Joseon Dynasty

*Seseupmu*: members of hereditary shaman families

*Sinbyeong* (lit. spirit illness): feature an unidentifiable symptom, presumably caused by spirit-possession

*Sindae*: long wooden pole symbolizing deities

*Sinmok*: lit. spirit tree

*Sinmyeong*: excitement/enthusiasm

*Sogo*: small drum

*Taak* [*ta-ak*]: percussion instruments

*Talchum*: masked dance

*Taepyeongso*: conical double-reed instrument

*Yangban*: aristocrats

*Yanggeum* [*yang-geum*]: hammered dulcimer

*Yangjung*: male members of hereditary shaman families who usually play instruments in shaman rituals

*Yeonhui* (lit. performance for entertainment): performing arts involving many different skills, including singing, playing instruments, and dancing; it refers to theatrical play involving masked dance in the context of IICH

*Yeo-seong gukgeukdan*: all-women *changgeuk* troupes

*Yeo-seong nongakdan*: female drumming troupes

*Yonggo* [*yong-go*] (lit. dragon drum): the biggest drum in Korean music

## Appendix II: Interview with Collaborators

*Dates are according to U.S. format.*

Bin Sunae (빈순애) – female shaman, associated with Gangneung *dangogut*  
In-person interview, Gangneung, Gangwon province, 8/26/11

Chang Jae Hyo (장재효) – leader of Sonagi Project  
In-person interview, New York, 3/28/12

Cho Jin-Young (조진영) – male government official, involved in organizing traditional performing arts  
In-person interview, Seoul, 8/12/10

Choi Junil (최준일) – male drummer; guest member of Sonagi Project  
In-person interview, New York, 4/14/12

Gong Bitna (공빛나) – female drummer; member of Rhyta  
In-person interview, New York, 4/26/12

(Members of) Gongmyoung (공명)  
In-person interview, Seoul, 7/15/11

Gyun Eun Kyung (권은경) – female *pansori gosu*  
Phone interview, 4/23/13  
Email correspondence, 5/7/13

Ha Taekhu (하택후) – male member of Dulsori  
In-person interview, Seoul, 11/17/11

Hesselink, Nathan – ethnomusicologist  
Informal conversation, Indianapolis, 11/16/13  
Email correspondence, 2/3/14

Hong Seongmin (홍성민) – female drummer; leader of the *pungmul* group Teo-ullim  
In-person interview, Seoul, 8/7/10  
In-person interview, Seoul, 11/2/11

Im Seonmi (임선미) – female apprentice for *munyeo*, associated with Gangneung *danogut*  
In-person interview, Gangneung, Gangwon province, 8/26/11  
Email correspondence, 4/26/13  
Phone interview, 5/16/13  
Phone interview, 5/18/13

Jeong Hoesook (정회석) – male *pansori* singer and *gosu*



In-person interview, Seoul, 9/27/11

Jeong Hwayeong (정화영) – male *pansori gosu*  
In-person interview, Seoul, 9/06/11

Jeong Hyangja (정향자) – female *pansori gosu*  
In-person interview, Seoul, 11/5/11  
Phone interview, 4/9/13

Jeong Sunrye (정순례) – member of married women's drumming group  
In-person interview, Seoul, 10/23/11

Jeong Wonyeong (정원영) – leader of the women's drumming group DoDo  
In-person interview, Seoul, 11/11/11

Jo Hansuk (조한숙) – female drummer; *sangsoe* of Pyeongtaek *nongak* group  
In-person interview, Cheonan, Chungcheong province, 7/20/11  
In-person interview, Cheonan, Chungcheong province, 10/26/11

Jung Hyun Ah (정현아) – female drummer; leader of Rhyta  
In-person interview, Seoul, 11/6/11

Kang Seokhyeong (강석형) – male drummer; member of Hanullim  
In-person interview, Seoul, 8/11/10

Kang Seonil (강선일) – male drummer; member of Gongmyoung  
In-person interview, Seoul, 7/26/11

Kim Cheongman (김청만) – male *pansori gosu*  
In-person interview, Seoul, 5/13/11  
In-person interview, Seoul, 8/27/11

Kim Duk Soo (김덕수) – leader of Hanullim; founder of *samulnori*  
In-person interview, Seoul, 8/13/11

Kim Gyuhyeong (김규형) – male drummer  
In-person interview, Seoul, 10/17/11  
In-person interview, Seoul, 10/20/11

Kim Hannah (김한나) – female drummer; member of SamcheongGak Cheongaram and Dasrum  
In-person interview, Seoul, 7/26/11

Kim Haram (김하람) – female member; member of Dulsori  
In-person interview, Seoul, 8/20/11  
In-person interview, Seoul, 11/17/11

Kim Ilhyeon (김일현) – male apprentice for *yangjung*, associated with Gangneung *danogut*  
Phone interview, 5/18/13

Kim Ju Hong (김주홍) – leader of Noreum Machi  
In-person interview, Seoul, 5/27/11

Kim Myeongdae (김명대) – primary *janggu* player of Gangneung *danogut*  
In-person interview, Gangneung, Gangwon province, 8/25/11-8/26/11

Kim So Ra (김소라) – female drummer; member of Jeongeup *nongak* group  
In-person interview, Jeongeup, Jeolla province, 6/11/11  
In-person interview, Seoul, 11/09/11  
Phone interview, 4/7/14

Kim Sumi (김수미) – female *pansori* singer trained in *gobeop*  
Informal conversation, Seoul, 9/07/11  
In-person interview, Seoul, 9/19/11  
Email correspondence, 4/7/13  
Email correspondence, 4/13/13

Kim Yeong-eun (김영은) – female drummer; leader of Haedanghwa  
In-person interview, Seoul, 11/11/11

Kim Yeong-eun (김영은) – female drummer; member of Noriggot  
In-person interview, Seoul, 11/9/11

Kim Yujin (김유진) – female drummer; member of Hanullim  
In-person interview, Seoul, 8/11/10

Lee Bohyung (이보형) – music scholar  
In-person interview, Seoul, 7/12/08  
In-person interview, Seoul, 7/12/10  
In-person interview, New York, 10/29/12  
In-person interview, Seoul, 9/22/11  
Phone interview, 5/9/13

Lee Chohye (이초혜) – female *yeonhui* major  
In-person interview, Seoul, 11/9/11

Lee Hana (이하나) – female drummer; guest member of Sonagi Project  
In-person interview, New York, 4/26/12

Lee Hyeonjin (이현진) – female *gayageum* player  
Phone interview, 2/1/14

Lee Jeongja (이정자) – former female member of Dure

In-person interview, Gapyeong, Gyeonggi province, 7/28/10

Lee Jinyeo (이지녀) – female shaman associated with Hwanghaedo *gut*

In-person interview, Seoul, 7/9/08

Lee Seongjae (이성재) – male drummer; member of U-Hee

In-person interview, Seoul, 11/3/11

Lee Taebaek (이태백) – male *pansori gosu* and *ajaeng* player

In-person interview, Seoul, 9/24/11

Moon Injae (문인재) – female *yeonhui* major

In-person interview, Seoul, 11/9/11

Moon Seoni (문선이) – leader of the married women's group Dangnaru

In-person interview, Dangjin, Chungcheong province, 7/18/08

Na Geumchu (나금추) – former member of *yeoseong nongakdan*

In-person interview, Buan [double-check], Jeolla province, 8/19/10

Nam Gimun (남기문) – male member of Gugakwon *samulnori* team

Informal conversation, Seoul, 6/21/11

In-person interview, Seoul, 8/16/11

Nam Pilbong (남필봉) – male drummer; leader of Bitnae *nongak* group

In-person interview, Seoul, 7/30/10

(Members of) Noriggot (놀이꽃)

In-person interview, Seoul, 11/9/11

Oh Hyun-ju (오현주) – female drummer; member of Noreum Machi

In-person interview, Seoul, 7/16/10

In-person interview, Seoul, 5/27/11

In-person interview, Seoul, 10/27/11

Park Eunha (박은하) – female drummer and dancer; member of Gugakwon *samulnori* team

In-person interview, Seoul, 7/2/08

In-person interview, Seoul, 6/21/11

Informal conversation, Seoul, 8/16/11

Informal conversation, Seoul, 9/3/11

In-person interview, Seoul, 9/9/11

In-person interview, Seoul, 10/7/11

In-person interview, Seoul, 11/10/11

Phone interview, 4/2/14

Park Kyung Jin (박경진) – female drummer; member of SamcheongGak Cheongaram and Dasrum  
In-person interview, Seoul, 7/26/11

Pyo Seonu (표선우) – female member of Anseong Municipal Namsadang Baudeogi Pungmuldan  
In-person interview, Anseong, Gyeonggi province, 7/19/08  
In-person interview, Anseong, Gyeonggi province, 8/18/11

Seo Jin-gyeong (서진경) – *pansori* singer; daughter of master *pansori* singer Park Songhee  
Phone interview, 2/17/13

Shin Heera (신희라) – female apprentice for *munyeo*, associated with Gangneung *danogut*  
In-person interview, Gangneung, Gangwon province, 08/26/11  
Phone interview, 5/16/13

Shin Heeyeon (신희연) – female drummer; leader of Taedong  
In-person interview, Seoul, 7/23/10  
In-person interview, Seoul, 5/7/11  
In-person interview, Seoul, 9/5/11  
In-person interview, Seoul, 11/2/11

(Staff members of) Sinmyung Nanum (신명나눔)  
In-person interview, Seoul, 10/5/11

(Members of) Sonagi Project  
In-person interview, New York, 4/14/12

Song Sunseop (송순섭) – male master *pansori* singer  
In-person interview, Seoul, 11/5/11

Won Il (원일) – male drummer and composer  
In-person interview, Seoul, 7/13/10

Wong, Deborah - ethnomusicologist  
Informal conversation, Seoul, 10/15/11

Yang Jaechun (양재춘) – male drummer; husband of Shin Heeyeon  
In-person interview, Seoul, 5/7/11

Yang Jinseong (양진성) – leader of Pilbong *nongak* group  
In-person interview, Seoul, 8/19/10

Yim Mijoung (임미정) – female drummer; former member of Rhyta  
In-person interview, Seoul, 7/7/08 & 7/11/08  
Informal conversation, Seoul, 7/8/10  
In-person interview, Seoul, 4/27/11

In-person interview, Seoul, 8/17/11  
In-person interview, Seoul, 10/31/11

Yoo Jihwa (유지화) – leader of Jeongeup nongak group; former member of yeoseong nongakdan  
In-person interview, Jeongeup, Jeolla province, 8/18/10  
Informal conversation, Jeongeup, Jeolla province, 6/11/11

Yoo Sojeong (유소정) – female drummer; former member of Hanullim and Assim  
In-person interview, Seoul, 9/6/11  
In-person interview, Seoul, 11/1/11

Yoo Sunja (유순자) – former member of *yeoseong nongakdan*  
In-person interview, Seoul, 8/11/10

Yoon Yeochang (윤여창) – former male member of Dure  
In-person interview, Seoul, 7/22/10

Yu Kyung-Hwa (유경화) – female drummer and *cheolhyeongeum* player  
In-person interview, Seoul, 8/6/10  
In-person interview, Seoul, 4/28/11  
In-person interview, Seoul, 9/2/11  
In-person interview, Seoul, 11/4/11

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