

FOLK AND CLASSICAL MUSIC OF KOREA

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INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY KYUNG HO PARK

The Lee Palace Orchestra, Court Musicians

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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

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The Courtesan's Lament
Ballad of Chok Byuk
Dancing Girls' Song
Requiem for Ancestors' Shrine
Ten Thousands Waves Calm
Song of Eternal Spring
Six-Letter Lines
Farmer's Song
Boundary and Surface
Music with Words

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KOREA

Folk & Classical Music

Introduction and notes on the recordings
by KYUNG HO PARK

The cultural similarity between Korea and China is an inevitable result of their geographical and political relationships. Yet while Korean civilization bears a noticeable Chinese trend in its background, it has for thousands of years maintained a strong individuality of its own, quite different from that of Chinese. Were it an accepted truth that music is a form of art most sensitive to the social climate, Korean music would be an excellent specimen. The unfortunate political and social history of the Korean people has infected their music with melancholy, nostalgia and anguish, which are often found seasoned with satirical

humor. Love is also a popular theme in Korean folk music. But it is love too often frustrated by elders or greedy rulers, so the songs are likely to be an appeal to tears rather than to rapture. There are also songs of farmers, the brightest of all Korean folk songs, which deal with toil, hope and thanksgiving. And there is the inevitable song of the young wife whose life is miserably infringed by her tyrannical mother-in-law.

The classic music of Korea is represented by what is generally known as ah ahk, literally meaning "neat music." The performance of ah ahk has been, and still is to a great extent, strictly limited to court and religious occasions, such as Confucian rituals. Ah ahk is performed in orchestra, sometimes with voice. The orchestra comprises all the conventional instruments of three types -- string, wind, and percussion. They are made of the chief "elements" of nature -- wood,



The Lee Palace Orchestra

stone, metal, etc. -- so that the full orchestra symbolically represents the sound of nature. Some of the instruments, such as kyung or saing whang, are thousands of years old, and no one has been allowed to change their form. The theory of music is chiefly based on philosophy rather than artistry or science. The intricate subjects of politics, religion, sex, the universe, color the five elements of nature (wood, fire, earth, metal and water), the four seasons, and the animal kingdom are interwoven to form the underlying theory of classical music. The musician must strive to evoke a spiritual effect from every sound he makes. Even today, Korean music is mostly confined to the professional musicians or dancing girls.

SIDE I

CHANG POO TA RYONG (THE COURTESAN'S LAMENT): This is a popular song of the south telling of the bitter life of a daughter-in-law who escapes from the house of her in-laws and becomes a prostitute, which she prefers to living with the cruel mother-in-law. The voice is accompanied by flute and chang go.

SHIN TAN GA -- CHOK BYUK POO (NEW SHORT SONG -- A BALLAD OF CHOK BYUK): Tan ga is a kind of country song or ballad, usually dealing with stories of Chinese history. This particular song is about Chok Byuk, a famous battle ground. It was written by the Chinese poet Sho Dong Pa, during the Tang dynasty. The poetry describes the beauty of the landscape and nature: "Look at this universe! The water flows on without stop. Also the moon is now a full moon but sooner or later she should be a half-moon, and then disappear some day soon, and come out someday, again and again. The universe is going on endless and forever. The fresh breeze and the bright moon will be a song to my ears and a landscape to my eyes..."



A village farmer with family.



Harvest festival



Dry ditch fishing

YOOK JA PAK EE -- NAM DOH CHAP GA (SIX-LETTER LINES -- SOUTHERN POPULAR SONG): This is one of the most popular of Southern Korean folk songs. It was composed during the Lee dynasty, about five hundred years ago. It says that there is not much difference between life and death, or between young and old, and that position in life is not significant. This type of song is usually accompanied by the chang go drum, shaped like an hourglass.

NOA RAI KA RAK: This is a folk song sung in the area of Seoul on social occasions by the gisangs (dancing girls). The accompanying instrument is a flute.

CHA JIN NONG POO GA (FARMER'S SONG): This is an excerpt from the story of Choon Hyang, an opera written by an unknown composer on the subject of absolute chastity, the highest virtue of womanhood. It dates from the Lee dynasty. The song tells something about the life of the farmer, his sowing and his harvesting, and in its natural setting it is sung by the farmers as they work in the fields. It expresses a joyful and optimistic view of human life.

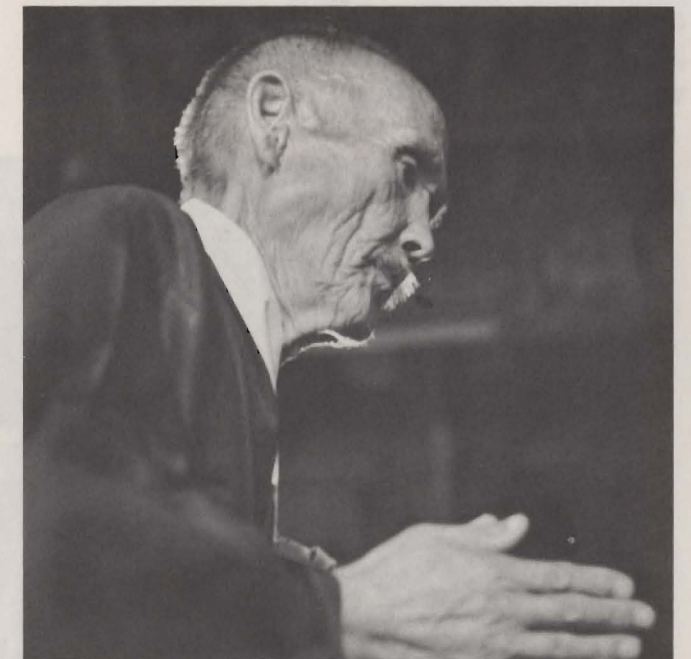
SIDE II

KEI MYON -- CHUNG AHK (BOUNDARY AND SURFACE -- RIGHT MUSIC): Chung ahk is a sort of music standardized many centuries ago. Its form was prescribed by the Yong San Whoi San, the conference on the sacred mountain. It is believed that the music was imported into Korea about eight hundred years ago by way of China. Kei myon is Buddhist religious music.

WOO CHO -- CHUNG AHK (IN THE KEY OF WOO -- koong, sang, kag, chi, woo, music is mostly written in the pentatonic scale: Koong, Sang, Kag, Chi, Woo. This piece is presumably in the key of woo.



School during wartime - Eum Pyung



A Buddhist monk



Farmers' festival

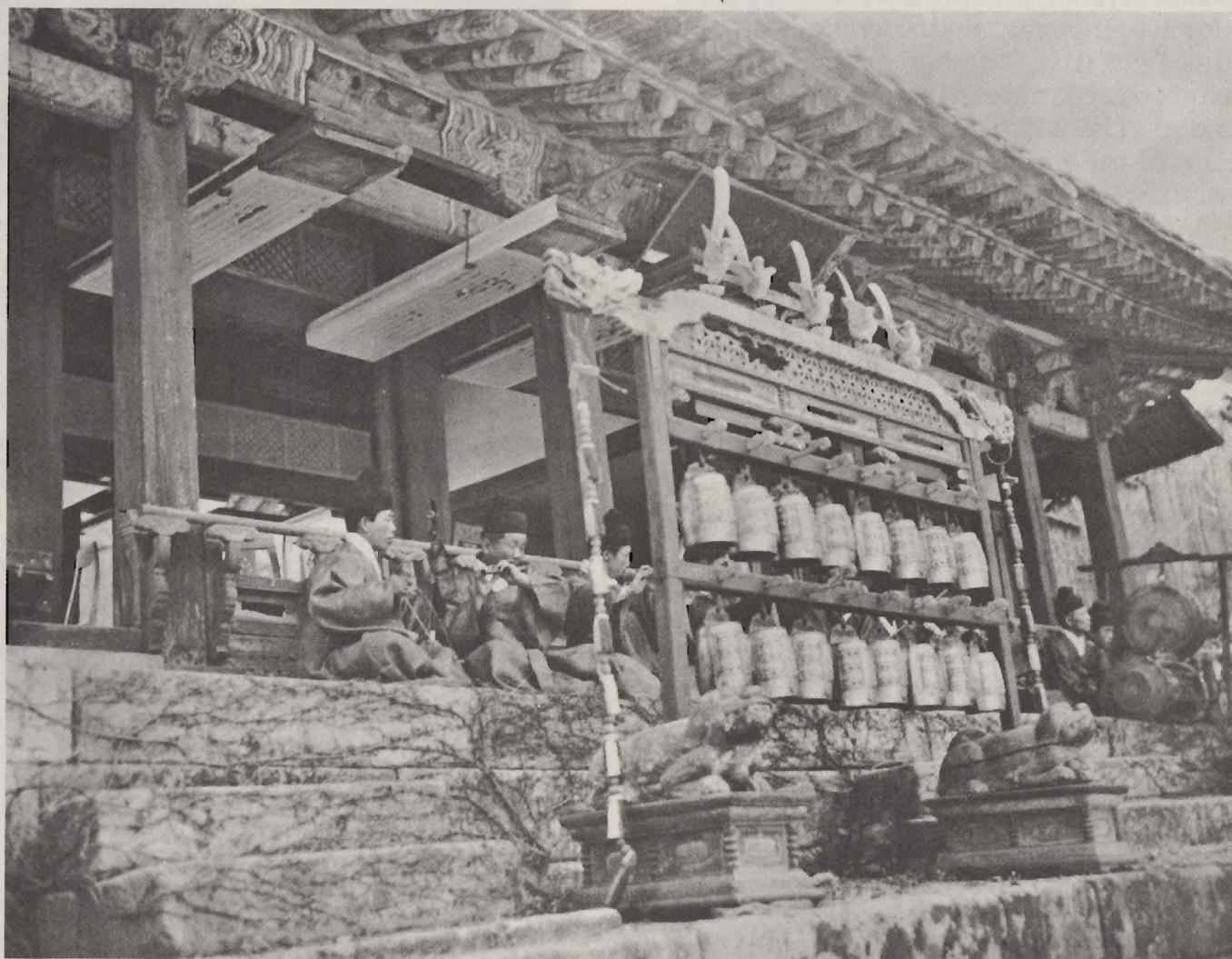
CHANG CHOON POOL LO CHI KOG -- AH AHK (SONG OF ETERNAL SPRING): This piece was written during the period of King Sejong, of the Ye dynasty, in honor of his having created and introduced the Korean alphabet. The composer is unknown. There are three types of Ah Ahk music: Court Music, Tang Music, and Country Music. This piece is Court Music.

MAN PA SIK -- AH AHK (TEN THOUSAND WAVES CALM): Korean flutes are generally made of bamboo, but occasionally of semi-precious stone such as jade. They are either vertical or horizontal types. This piece is played on a horizontal flute. There is a legend about the Royal Flute called Man Pa Sik, which says that when the king played it

all the waves of the sea became calm. The actual composer of this piece is unknown, though it was popularized by Pakh Yun, a scholar in the era of King Sejong.

ON AHK (MUSIC WITH WORDS): This ah ahk piece was written in 1450 by Chung In Cho. It has didactic words warning against the wasting of time.


JONG MYO YONG SHIN AHK -- AH AHK (REQUIEM FOR ANCESTORS' SHRINE): In Korean palaces it was once the custom to hold elaborate annual festivals to repose the souls of the royal ancestors. This piece is an example of music played on such an occasion. It was composed during the Sejong era.



Court musicians

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