

KOREANS PERFORMING FOR FOREIGN TROOPS: THE OCCIDENTALISM OF THE C.M.C. AND K.P.K.

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The Chosen Music Club (C.M.C.) and the K.P.K., which derives its name from the initials of the family names of its three main members (Kim Haesong 金海松, Paek Ŭnsŏn 白恩善, Kim Chŏnghwan 金貞桓), were two variety show collectives whose activities from the late 1930s to the 1950s shed light on the complexity of the notion of Occidentalism.¹ The entertainers employed by the collectives were among Korea's most talented and highly trained professionals; they played traditional music, modern folksongs and swing jazz, and performed both traditional and modern (including tap) dance and various stand-up comedy acts. Apart from an increase in the number of foreign songs the repertoire of the C.M.C. and the K.P.K. did not change much over the period, however the conditions in which they operated changed dramatically. When Korea was liberated from Japanese colonial rule to become, over a fairly short period of time, a different kind of protectorate with a major US military presence, the collectives found themselves confronted with different audiences and performing venues. Although fourteen countries formed part of the United Nations Command that supported the Republic of Korea during and after the Korean War (1950–53) with troops, US troops made up almost ninety per cent of the foreign military power and several tens of thousands of them remained on the peninsula after the war. From the late 1930s to the 1950s, both the C.M.C. and its successor, the K.P.K., went on tour performing to Japanese and US troops (the term “to pay ‘sympathy visits’ [*wimun bada* 慰問하다]” is often used) in Japan and Korea. Many of the stars in these collectives were successful recording artists in their own right, but the recognition they earned with foreign audiences through their work with the collectives had a major impact on their own aspirations and those of their peers.

The story of the two collectives is part of the legacy of one family. Kim Haesong, his wife Yi Nanyŏng 李蘭影 and their seven children played crucial roles in the development of Korean popular music in the twentieth century. Their work spans five decades, and across national borders, but the K.P.K., which was established at the end of the Pacific War and disbanded at the

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¹ Pak Ch'anho, *Han'guk kayosa* [A History of Korean Popular So (Seoul: Mizi books, 2009), pp.23–4; Hwang Mulp'yŏng, *Norae paengnyŏnsa* [A 100-year History of Songs] (Seoul: Sungil munhwasa, 1981), p.80.

2 For examples of those traits, see Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), pp.40, 324-25; James G. Carrier, ed., *Occidentalism: Images of the West* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p.27.

3 James G. Carrier, ed., *Occidentalism: Images of the West*, pp.1-3, 29.

4 Jonathan Spencer, "Occidentalism in the East: The Uses of the West in the Politics and Anthropology of South Asia," in *Occidentalism: Images of the West*, ed. James Carrier, pp.237-38.

start of the Korean War, was the only collective in which the Kims and at least three of their children worked together. Over the years, the family faced enormous challenges in the form of colonial oppression, censorship, violence, racism, sexism and poverty. However, through their talent, stubborn persistence, courage and hard work they were able to overcome most of the hurdles placed in their way and enjoyed success for decades, but not without making great sacrifices. For example, for many years they had to give up the dream of performing for paying audiences who admired them and had chosen to see them rather than some other group. While Japanese and American audiences often praised the shows, these were times of colonial oppression and war, and open professional competition was limited. What is more, whereas the Kims and their peers played key roles in the development of Korean popular music and its recognition abroad, their performances in some cases served only to emphasize their foreign audiences' cultural superiority. This study therefore considers the activities of the collectives from the viewpoint of both the entertainers and their audiences.

The members of the two collectives were very ambitious and believed that Korea could catch up with Japan and the modern West. In the eyes of the foreign audiences, however, this aspiration would not have been evident in the content or style of the shows. While Japanese audiences will have genuinely admired the quality of the performances and the skill of the entertainers, their attitude appears to have been rather patronizing. To many Japanese, Korean traditional music would have represented an authentic "Oriental" culture, albeit one that would typically serve to highlight the superiority of modernized Japanese culture compared with the provincial efforts of Korea. This may also explain why some Koreans who performed modern songs in Japan adopted Japanese stage names even before they were forced to do so by law; record producers felt that Japanese audiences were more likely to embrace a Japanese-style "modernity", rather than its Korean counterpart. To the majority of Americans, on the other hand, the shows would have offered basic entertainment, comforting in their endorsement of American cultural dominance and the Koreans' eagerness to emulate it. Few, however, would have considered Korean indigenous culture as offering anything of equal value. The choice to include both Occidental and Oriental elements in the performances (the use of Western names and the performance of American "standards", and the inclusion of well-known songs from other Asian countries) as well as the theatrical adoption of pre-conceived notions about East Asia, was therefore informed not by a desire to highlight the value of indigenous Korean culture, but to strike a balance between the emulation of Western culture and the retention of an Oriental character.

The term Occidentalism posits a generalising notion of the West as a single, sociocultural entity that serves to positively endorse the culture it is considered against.² Although a generalisation like many other paradigms,³ it has utility in the field of humanities. With careful examination, studies of Occidentalism can yield crucial insights into the sociopolitical structure and value system of a given local culture, whether in relation to its past or its future. A romantic view of that culture would hold that the imagined binary is ever-present, underpinned by an unbridgeable difference in values and belief systems, often validated by drawing on historical examples. A positivist view, on the other hand, would predict a narrowing of the cultural gap.⁴ It is common, therefore, to regard "Occidentalism" as the opposite of "Orientalism", but Xiaomei Chen points out that while the two may serve

similar purposes of highlighting difference, they are based on very different relationships of power. She warns that one should not regard them as representing one manifestation of an East/West binary, but adds that, like Orientalism, Occidentalism ultimately and perhaps paradoxically serves to highlight a misrepresented image of the self as unique and superior. Thus, even though Occidentalism may be inspired in some sense by Western Orientalism, and uses the West as a reference point, it may be manifested in entirely Asian contexts without any involvement of actual western countries or cultures.⁵

Catering to the Colonizer and its Subjects: The C.M.C.

From the 1920s onwards, Western-style entertainment swept across East Asia, and became a major source of inspiration for both Koreans and their Japanese colonizers (1910–45). It introduced new fashion, dance and musical styles, and allowed consumers to dream of romantic encounters with beautiful people. During this period Japanese colonial oppression could never be forgotten, but in what Gramscians would describe as a typical measure towards the consolidation of power, they used the growing consumer economy to keep Koreans preoccupied and allowed them to buy into a modern, fashionable lifestyle, which granted a sense of independence and connectedness with other consumers abroad.⁶ Towards the end of the 1930s, however, neither commerce nor entertainment could hide the fact that the country was becoming deeply involved in Japan's war effort. As the fighting in the Pacific intensified, the Japanese increased the oppression of their colonial subjects. Those working in the entertainment industry in Korea saw censorship become stricter, resources dwindle, and opportunities decrease. By the time of liberation, the production of records, radio programs and films for the sole purpose of entertainment had come to a stop.

The disruption of live performance was also caused by the arrival of new technologies. With the emergence of talkies in the mid-1930s, and the subsequent increase of diegetic sound and music, opportunities for film narrators (*pyŏnsa* 辯士) and theatre orchestras dwindled. Many people continued to enjoy watching narrators perform, so the change was gradual, especially since in the first few years of talkies the quality of the sound was often poor, and the voices of some popular foreign actors proved to be disappointing. Indeed, there were many occasions when the sound was turned off in favour of live music or a noted off-screen film narrator (whose services were now affordable), often at smaller theatres which had less advanced sound systems. However, the rise of diegetic sound was irreversible, and to make ends meet, some narrators, such as Kim Yŏnghwan 金永煥 and Kim Chosŏng 金肇聲, formed entertainment groups that provided music and comedy as well as film narration—Kim Yŏnghwan was probably the first narrator to make the transition to comedy as his main occupation. Having been a member of the Arirang Song and Dance Company (Arirang kamu kŭktan 아리랑歌舞劇團), a collective that included composer-guitarist Pak Shich'un 朴是春 (1913–1996) and offered music, dance and comedy, around the mid-1930s he reportedly formed his own troupe, named Sŏngjwa 星座. Because comic sketches and short plays made up a considerable part, the troupe's repertoire was among the first to be labelled Narrator's Play (*pyŏnsagŭk* 辯士劇). A similar collective was established in early 1935 by Kim Chosŏng. His Yewŏnjwa 藝苑座 group offered, besides sketches and short plays, jazz music, and folk and popular songs.⁷

5 Xiaomei Chen, *Occidentalism: A Theory of Counter-Discourse in Post-Mao China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp.xi, 4–5.

6 See Roald Maliangkay, "New Symbolism and Retail Therapy: Advertising Novelties in Korea's Colonial Period," *East Asian History* 36 (2008): 29–54, at pp.32–3.

7 Pak Ch'anho, *Han'guk kayosa* 2, p.335; Yŏ Sŏnjŏng, "Musŏng yŏnghwa shidae shingmin toshi Sŏur-ŭi yŏnghwa kwallamsŏng yŏn'gu" ["Study of the Film Spectatorship in Colonial Seoul in the Silent Film Era"] (MA thesis, Chungang University, 1999), p.36; *Chosŏn chungang ilbo* [The Korea Central Daily News] 21/2/1935, p.2; see also Chŏng Chonghwa, *Han'guk yŏnghwa sa* [A History of Korean Film] 1 (Seoul: Yŏllhwadang misul mun'gu, 1997), p.24. The groups sought not only to professionalize the intermission entertainment and in doing so persuade theatre managers to continue to employ them despite the near disappearance of silent films, but they also hoped to compete with other forms of theatrical entertainment, such as new-school plays (*shinp'agŭk* 新派劇), Kino Dramas (k'inodŭrama 키노드라마), and the increasingly popular stand-up comedians (*chaedamkkun* 재담꾼). Andrew Killick notes that in new-school plays too, the interludes evolved into a musical variety show with sketches and dance. Andrew P. Killick, "The Invention of Traditional Korean Opera and the Problem of the Traditionesque: Ch'anggŭk and its Relation to P'ansori Narratives" (PhD thesis, University of Washington, 1998), pp.144–45.

8 The Venus Opera Troupe is said to have been a copy of the Japanese Asakusa Opera, which offered a wide range of light entertainment. Pak Ch'anho, *Han'guk kayosa 1*, p.540. According to Hwang Munp'yōng, the Three Streams Operetta Group was established by Kim Sorang 金小浪. Hwang Munp'yōng, *Norae paengnyōnsa*, p.154.

9 See Han'guk chōngshin munhwa yōn'guwōn [Academy of Korean Studies], *Han'guk yusōnggi ūmban ch'ongmongnok* [Complete List of Korean Recordings from the Colonial Period] (Seoul: Minsogwōn, 1998), p.727; Ch'oe Ch'angho, *Minjok sunan'gi-ūi taejung kayosa* [A History of Popular Songs from the People's Trial Period] (Seoul: Irwōl sōgak, 2000), pp.95–6; Pan Chaeshik, *Chaedam chōnnyōn sa* [A Thousand-year History of Comic Storytelling] (Seoul: Paekchungdang, 2000), p.309; Pak Ch'anho, *Han'guk kayosa 1*, p.543; Yi Tongsun, *Pōnji ōmnūn chumak* [The Tavern Without a Number] (Seoul: Sōn, 2007), pp.293–95. Ross Laird and Brian Rust, *Discography of Okeh Records, 1918–1934* (Westport: Praeger Publisher, 2004), pp.2, 5; Roald Maliangkay, "Their Masters' Voice: Korean Traditional Music SPs (Standard Play Records) under Japanese Colonial Rule," *The World of Music* 49.3 (2007): 53–74, at pp.56–7.

10 The band stayed three days in Tokyo, three days in Osaka, and one day in Kobe, Kyoto and Nagoya respectively. Kim Chip'yōng argues that this is the earliest record of an overseas troop visit by a Korean act. Kim Chip'yōng, *Han'guk kayo chōngsbinsa* [A Spiritual History of Korean Songs] (Seoul: Arūm ch'ulp'ansa, 2000), p.370. I believe that Kim's characterization of "unedited" is useful, since it suggests a disregard for the camera setting and the inclusion of people and actions unrelated to the performance, but I believe all movies, including documentaries, involve some form of editing.

11 Chōng Taeyōng, *Pak Hwasōng-gwa Yi Nanyōng: Kūdū-ūi sarang-gwa ijūm* [Pak Hwasōng and Yi Nanyōng: Their Lives and Beliefs] (Seoul: News Today, 2009), p.29.

12 Kim Hūngsan was a guitar player in the band, and along with Son Yōngjun he set up one of the first record companies after the war (Star Records, in Pusan). Pak Ch'anho, *Han'guk kayosa* [A History of Korean Popular Songs] 2 (Seoul: Mizi books, 2009), pp.22, 223; see also Kim Chip'yōng, *Han'guk kayo chōngsbinsa*, p.370; Yi Tongsun, *Pōnji ōmnūn chumak*, p.263.

13 Yi Tongsun, *Pōnji ōmnūn chumak*, pp.301–2.

14 Pak Ch'anho, *Han'guk kayosa 1*, p.255.

15 Kim Chip'yōng, *Han'guk kayo chōngsbinsa*, pp.374–75; Yi Tongsun, *Pōnji ōmnūn chumak*, p.307; Pak Ch'anho, *Han'guk kayosa 1*, pp.545–46.

After a career as a musician playing the saxophone and trumpet for, among others, the Venus Opera Troupe (*Kūmsōng op'era kūktan* 금성오페라劇團), in 1930 Yi Ch'ōl 李哲 (1903–44) established the Three Streams Operetta Group (*Samch'ōn kagūktan* 三川歌劇團), which offered a Korean version of Japan's all-female Takarazuka-style (宝塚) musical theatre.⁸ In 1932 Yi established a Korean subsidiary of the Japanese Imperial Record Co. Ltd. (*Teikoku chikuonki kabushiki kaisha* 帝國蓄音器株式會社, or "Teichiku") called Okeh 오케. Okeh Records was started in the US in 1918 and became a subsidiary of Columbia Phonograph Co. in 1926. Two years later, the latter entered a joint venture with the Japan Record Co. Ltd. (*Kabushiki kaisha Nihon chikuonki shōkai* 株式会社日本蓄音器商會), which would allow the Korean Okeh subsidiary to use its recording facilities.⁹ Although he was an ambitious manager, Yi continued to be active as a musician, and sometimes performed on stage alongside the talent he signed. In April 1936, approximately six months after the first Korean-made sound film *Story of Ch'unhyang* (Ch'unhyangjōn 春香傳) came out, he produced the movie *A Korea of Songs* (Norae Chosōn 노래조선). The movie has been lost, but a significant part of it is said to have comprised footage of Okeh's talent carrying out sympathy visits as part of the so-called Okeh Band (*Ok'e yōnjudan* 오케연주단) in Japan from February to March 1936.¹⁰ The documentary-like movie featured many of the stars under contract with Okeh, including singer Ko Poksu 高福壽, and epic song (*p'ansori*) singer Im Pangul 林芳蔚, singer-composer-lyricist Kim Haesong, drummer Yi Pongnyong 李鳳用 (1914–87), and his sister, singer Yi Nanyōng — as part of an act called The Jacket Sisters (*Chōgori sisūt'ōsū* 저고리 시스터즈).¹¹ The band had been established by Son Mogin 孫牧人, also known by his stage name Son Andre (Andūre 안드레), after he returned from studying in Japan, and included a long list of some sixty of Korea's biggest stars, including those mentioned, as well as the singers Chang Sejōng (張世貞, 1921–2003) and Yi Hwaja 李花子 and comedian Shin Pulch'ul 申不出. The group was very successful and also went on tour in China and Manchuria.¹²

Despite the band's many accomplishments, at the end of 1936 the head company Teichiku decided to take over management of its Korean subsidiary.¹³ This did not, however, mean the end of Yi's employment with the company, nor of his activities as a band manager. In 1938, as the new head of the editing department, Yi set up the Okeh Grand Shows, which were similar in content to the shows he had arranged previously, but even larger in scale. He named the collective the Korea Musical Club (Chosōn akkūktan 朝鮮樂劇團) and added the acronym C.M.C., which apart from the stars Son Mogin, Ko Poksu, Yi Nanyōng and Yi Pongnyong, included saxophonist Song Hūisōn 宋熙善 and composer-guitarist Pak Shich'un.¹⁴

In March 1939, Yi sent 28 of its members on another two-month tour to Japan. The second Japan tour involved a total of 204 performances in 63 days, which meant that the group performed an average of more than three times per day. Most of the people in the audience were Korean immigrant workers, but it is said that noted Japanese critics were greatly impressed and this caused them to argue that the Japanese entertainment scene needed to reconsider what it was doing.¹⁵ Saitō Torajirō's 1939 movie *The Insightful Wife* (Omoitsuki fujin 思ひつき夫人) includes a sequence in which the group can be seen performing at a theatre in Japan. The otherwise fictional comedy begins with a stationary shot of the banner outside that carries the name of the company in large characters ("Chosōn akkūktan, C.M.C. jazz band") with several stills highlighting various aspects of the show underneath it. During the first half of the scene included here, a performance by Kim

**Figure 1**

A still from the film *The Insightful Wife* (*Omoitsuki fujin* 思ひつき夫人) showing a performance by Chōnggu 金貞九. An extract from the film can be viewed in the online version of this paper.

Chōnggu 金貞九 (1916–98), the name and logo of the Okeh Recording company are clearly visible on the percussion set-up on stage (see Figure 1). The sequence suggests that the show consisted mostly of traditional forms of music, but the horn section in the background would have supported modern styles of music as well, including swing jazz, which had been very popular in Korea and Japan for more than a decade.¹⁶ After performing at the capital's Asakusa Kagetsu 浅草花月 theatre for ten days, the tour took the group south, towards Osaka, Nagoya, Kyoto and Kobe.¹⁷ Although the movie suggests that the shows were very popular, tour manager Kim Sangjin had various difficulties preparing the tour, and was forced to spend his first day in Tokyo visiting imperial shrines before agreeing to a series of performances at the First Army Hospital. It is rumoured that at the first show in Osaka, some people took offence at the large yin-yang symbols that were drawn on four large gates used as props on stage as well as on the musicians' drums, presumably because the symbol was associated with Korean nationalism. Kim Sangjin was subsequently jailed for approximately eleven days and it is said that when Yi Ch'ŏl heard of this he rushed to Japan, where he, too, was arrested and thrown in the same cell.¹⁸ Colonial oppression would overshadow the performances until the last day of the tour, when the band's main singers, including Yi Nanyōng, Nam Insu 南仁樹 (1918–62), Chang Sejōng and Yi In'gwŏn 李寅權, are said to have been forced to sing the Japanese military song *Father, You Were Strong* (Chichiyo anata wa tsuyokatta 父よあなたは強かった).¹⁹

Following the success of the first tour, a second was organized, and on 26 December 1939, the troupe returned to Tokyo for another two months but the problems continued. The tour manager was unable to book the Japan Theatre for the shows, eventually managing to secure the Tougeki 東劇 Theatre. According to Pak Ch'anho, the performers were treated like peasants, and as a consequence they translated all the lyrics into Japanese and swapped their costumes for Western clothing as soon as they arrived in Osaka.²⁰ A report on this tour in the Japanese-language *Seoul Daily* (Keijō nippō 京城日報), does not, of course, speak of these conditions. It provides details on the various aspect of the show by “the stars of the Korea Musical Club” (朝鮮樂劇團のスター) and points out that apart from traditional

16 Chang Yujōng, *Oppa-nŭn p'unggak-chaengi-ya* [My Brother is a Street Singer] (Seoul: Hwanggūmgaji, 2006), pp.96–7. In Japan, many people considered swing jazz a marker of true civilization. E. Taylor Atkins, *Blue Nippon: Authenticating Jazz in Japan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), pp.106–7.

17 Yi Tongsun, *Pōnji ōmnŭn chumak*, p.307.

18 Kim Chip'yōng, *Han'guk kayo chōngshinsa*, p.375; Pak Ch'anho, *Han'guk kayosa 1*, p.546.

19 Pak Ch'anho, *Han'guk kayosa 1*, p.546.

20 Pak Ch'anho, *Han'guk kayosa 1*, p.547.

21 *Keijō nippō* 20/2/1940: 4.

22 Yi Tongsun, *Pōnjiōmmūn chumak*, p.297.

23 E. Taylor Atkins, *Blue Nippon: Authenticating Jazz in Japan*, pp.158–60.

24 Park Sang Mi's study of the use of Korean dancer Choe Seung-hui by the Japanese authorities provides excellent examples of self-Orientalism imposed by the colonial power. Park Sang Mi, "The Making of a Cultural Icon for the Japanese Empire: Choe Seung-hui's U.S. Dance Tours and 'New Asian Culture' in the 1930s and 1940s," *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 14.3 (Winter 2006): 597–632.

25 Ch'oe Ch'angho, *Minjok sunan'gi-ūi taejung kayosa*, p.183; Hwang Munp'yōng, *Inmul-lo pon jōnyesa: salm-ūi paljaguk* [A History of Entertainment as Viewed through People: The Footsteps of Their Lives] 1 (Seoul: Sōn, 2000), p.167.

26 Pak Ch'anho, *Han'guk kayosa 2*, p.645; Hwang Munp'yōng argues that the song was popular in 1953. Hwang Munp'yōng, *Norae paengnyōnsa*, pp.77–8; Han'guk chōngshin munhwa yōn'guwōn, *Han'guk yusōnggi ūmban ch'ongmongnok*, pp.827, 835.

27 Chang Yujōng, *Oppa-nūn p'unggakchaengi-ya*, pp.71, 194; Pak Ch'anho, *Han'guk kayosa 1*, p.234. Ch'oe Ch'angho says he worked as a music teacher for Ehwa Women's Junior College. Ch'oe Ch'angho, *Minjok sunan'gi-ūi taejung kayosa*, p.192.

28 Han'guk chōngshin munhwa yōn'guwōn, *Han'guk yusōnggi ūmban ch'ongmongnok*, pp.788, 790, 794, 798, 803; Chang Yujōng, *Oppa-nūn p'unggakchaengi-ya*, p.202. Pak Ch'anho suggests Samuyōl was derived from the English name Samuel. Pak Ch'anho, *Han'guk kayosa 1*, p.253.

29 Yi married Kim in November 1937, but the marriage did not bring her happiness. Kim was a musical genius, but he was tough and stubborn, and had numerous affairs. Chōng T'aeyōng, *Pak Hwasōng-gwa Yi Nanyōng: Kūdūr-ūi sarang-gwa ijim*, pp.18–28, 45; Kim Sook-ja, personal communication, Las Vegas, Nov. 2009.

30 Ch'oe Ch'angho, *Minjok sunan'gi-ūi taejung kayosa*, p.183.

31 Hwang Munp'yōng, *Inmul-lo pon jōnyesa: salm-ūi paljaguk 1*, p.166.

32 Yi Sōgu, "Yuhaeng kasu kūmsōk hoasang" [Review of Pop Singers of the Past and Present], *Samch'ōlli* [Three Thousand Li] 10:8 (1939): 152.

33 At least 183 popular songs are accredited to Kim. Chang Yujōng, *Oppa-nūn p'unggakchaengi-ya*, p.66.

34 Hwang Munp'yōng, *Inmul-lo pon jōnyesa*, p.169; Pak Ch'anho, *Han'guk kayosa 1*, p.330.

35 The song sings of the Japanese Emperor and the British and American foes. Chōng T'aeyōng, *Pak Hwasōng-gwa Yi Nanyōng*, p.46.

music and Japanese military songs, the "C.M.C. Band" would play swing jazz, and provide the accompaniment to jazz songs and tap dance.²¹

Apart from these shows, a number of other Korean singers were able to make money in Japan from the mid-1930s onwards. Even though they were still treated as colonial subjects and endured the threat of police violence, many of those in the industry had studied in Japan and knew how to interact with Japanese. An important reason for Korean artists to go to Japan was that the record companies in Korea lacked proper recording facilities.²² The invitation to work at a studio in Japan was a rare opportunity for them to travel abroad and compare themselves to their peers overseas. The Japanese audiences by and large genuinely appreciated the artists, who were not always easily identified as Korean because they sang in Japanese and often used a Japanese pseudonym. Other reasons for the availability of work in Japan may have included the dwindling of Japan's live music scene, but the nation's increasing involvement in war did not affect entertainment activities much.²³ The Japanese government, on the other hand, may have been quite happy to see the Korean collectives perform for its troops, especially if their program supported a romantic Orientalist view.²⁴

Kim Haesong was born Kim Songgyu 金松奎 in Kaech'ōn 价川 in South P'yōngan 平安 province in 1911. It is said that he displayed a great talent for music from the time he entered the Sungshil Vocational School 崇實專門學校 in Pyongyang. He was very skilled at playing the ukulele and soon became active as a professional singer-guitarist.²⁵ Among the songs he composed and sang were: *Is Youth Unsettled?* (Ch'ōngch'un-ūn mulgyōrin'ga ch'uchun-e mulgyōrin'ga), *The Emptiness of Sorrow* (Sōrum-ūi pōlp'an sel'um-e byōn'p'an), *The Autumn Festival* (Tanp'ungje 丹楓祭), and *My Hometown Where the Windmills Turn* (P'ungch'a tonūn kohyang 풍차 도는 고향). Some time in the early 1930s he moved to Seoul, where he was soon employed by record companies. Among Kim's biggest hits were *The Ferry Leaves* (Yōllaksōn-ūn ttōnanda 連絡船은 떠난다) on Okeh 1959 (1937) (see Figure 2), and *Goodbye [Topknot Decree]* (Chal ikkōra [tanballyōng] jal'itgera 단발령) on Okeh 12038 (1943), which ironically became a hit in Japan in 1951.²⁶ In August 1936 Kim Haesong brought out an adaptation of the Japanese hit song *Tokyo Rhapsody* (Tokyo rapusodi 東京ラプソディ) as *Seoul of Flowers* (Kkot Sōul 꽃서울).

Kim was not the first Korean to bring out a cover version of a Japanese hit song. In 1932, the singer Ch'ae Kyuyōp (蔡奎燁, 1906?–1949) recorded *Will Drinking Lead to Tears or Relief?* (Sur-ūn nunmurilkka hansumiralkka 술은 눈물일까 한숨이랄까), a Korean version of *Sake wa namida ka tameiki ka* 酒は涙か溜息か, which had been a major hit in Japan for Fujiyama Ichirō 藤山 一郎 in the previous year. Ch'ae had been born in Hamhūng 咸興, in Hamgyōng 咸鏡 province, and had worked briefly as a music teacher at Kūnhwa Girls' College 權花女學校 in Seoul's central Ankuk 安國 area following his graduation from the Central Conservatorium in Tokyo. Because of his fine voice, various Japanese record companies asked him to perform for them, which he did under the pseudonym Hasegawa Ichiro 長谷川 一郎.²⁷ The cross-national production and marketing of music continued in January 1936 and March 1937, when Okeh brought out a total of five jazz songs (*tchaesū ssong* 찼스송) sung in Korean by the Japanese singer Dick Mine (Mine Tokuichi 三根徳一, 1908–1991) under the name Samuyōl 三又悦: *Dinab* (Taina 다이나), *Gypsy Moon* (Chipshi-ūi tal 집시의 달), *Ukelele Baby* (Uk'urere ppebi 우쿠레레빼비), *St. Louis Blues* (Sent'ū ruisū purusū 센트루이스부루스) and *Sweet January* (Sūwit ch'eniri 스위트니리). *Dinab*

became a hit, and it is said that Mine received many fan letters from Koreans.²⁸

Around 1935, not long before he would first meet his later wife singer-actress Yi Nanyōng,²⁹ Yi Ch'ol hired Kim to compose songs exclusively for Okeh.³⁰ In 1937 Kim wrote *Separation Blues* (Ibyōr-ūi pūllusū 이별의 블루스) for Japan's leading female vocalist at the time, Awaya Noriko 淡谷のり子, but it was banned because it criticised Japanese fascism.³¹ In 1939, having briefly worked exclusively for Victor Records in the previous year, Kim moved to Columbia Records, before finally returning to Okeh.³² Having already used the stage name Kim Haesong as a performer, in 1939 Kim began to also use it for his musical scores.³³ Although he also performed with the C.M.C., he was not asked to tour Japan with the group in the beginning of 1939. Kim continued to compose songs instead, including *The Gypsies' Motherland* (Chipshi-ūi kohyang 집시의 고향), with which he and Yi Nanyōng would have a hit upon her return from Japan.³⁴ In 1943, around the time he began to work as a big band conductor, Kim composed the music for the pro-Japanese song *25 Million Emotions* (Ich'on obaengman kamgyōk 二千五百萬 感格), written by Cho Myōngam 趙鳴岩 and performed by Nam Insu and Yi Nanyōng.³⁵

Yi Nanyōng was born Yi Ongnye 李玉禮 in Yangdong 陽洞 in downtown Mokp'o 木浦, South Chōlla 全羅 province, on 6 June 1916. Her family was poor and her father, Yi Namsun 李南順 was always ill, so Ongnye's mother Pak Soa 朴小兒 had to go as far as Cheju 濟州 province to find work as a kitchen maid.³⁶ Thus from an early age Ongnye had to help out around the house. In 1923 she entered the Mokp'o National Elementary School, but because of her family's financial problems left in her fourth year. It is reported that she began making a name for herself from the age of twelve when she found a job singing at a cinema during intermissions. In 1929 she went to join her brother Pongnyong at a cotton factory where she worked for two years until she had enough money to travel to her mother. At the age of fifteen she began singing for Yi Ch'ol's Three Streams Operetta Group. In the same year she joined the Sun Show Band (*T'aeyang kagūktan* 太陽歌劇團), but when the group went to perform in Osaka, it was unable to sell tickets because of the recession and it eventually disbanded.³⁷ On 26 August 1933, Pacific Records brought out two recordings of her as a member of the group—*Fading Youth* (Shidūrūn ch'ōngch'un 시들은 青春) and *A Foregone Dream* (Chinagan yet kkum 지나간 옛꿈)—but she was never paid.³⁸ Having no money even to return home, the young teenager ended up roaming the streets of Osaka in search for a job and a way home. She managed to survive by singing at a low-class bar.

After some time, Yi Ch'ol located her and had her sign a contract to sing exclusively for his label. In 1932, she recorded the popular song *Fragrance* (Hyangsu 鄉愁) and, at the end of September 1933, the theme song of the movie *Chongno* (중로, dir. Yang Ch'ol, 1933).³⁹ Recordings of the songs *Phoenix* (Pulsajo 不死鳥) and *Solitude* (Kojōk 孤寂), by composer Mun Howōl 文湖月, followed in the next month.⁴⁰ In 1935 she recorded *Tears of Mokp'o* (Mokp'o-ūi nunmul 木浦의 눈물), composed by Mun Ilsōk and



Figure 2

The Ferry Leaves (Yöllaksōn-ūn ttōnanda 連絡船은 떠난다) on Okeh 1959 (1937) lyrics sheet

36 Chōng T'aeyōng claims that drinking was the cause of her father's condition (Chōng T'aeyōng, *Pak Hwasōng-gwa Yi Nanyōng*, p. 44), but in an interview conducted in 1935 she said that even when she went to perform in Japan, her mother asked her to send medicine. See *Three Thousand Li* (Samch'ōlli 三千里) 8:7 (August 1935), p.125; see also Pak Ch'anho, *Han'guk kayosa 1*, p.346.

37 According to Hwang Munp'yōng it was the Three Streams Operetta Group with which Yi went to perform in Japan. Hwang Munp'yōng, *Norae paengnyōnsa*, pp.104-5; Pak Ch'anho, *Han'guk kayosa 1*, p.345; Chōng T'aeyōng, *Pak Hwasōng-gwa Yi Nanyōng*, p.44.

38 Pak Ch'anho, *Han'guk kayosa 1*, p.346; see also Taihei 8065 (in the source given here transcribed as 시드는 青春) and 8068: Han'guk chōngshin munhwa yōn'guwōn, *Han'guk yusōnggi ūmban ch'ongmongnok*, pp.901-2.

39 See Okeh 1580-B: Han'guk chōngshin munhwa yōn'guwōn, *Han'guk yusōnggi ūmban ch'ongmongnok*, pp.747, 902; Pak Ch'anho, *Han'guk kayosa 1*, p.346.

40 Okeh 1587: Han'guk chōngshin

munhwa yŏn'guwŏn, *Han'guk yusŏnggi ūmban ch'ongmongnok*, p.749. Chŏng T'aeyŏng gives 1934 as the release date for *Phoenix*. Chŏng T'aeyŏng, *Pak Hwasŏng-gwa Yi Nanyŏng*, p.28.

41 Okeh 1795: Han'guk chŏngshin munhwa yŏn'guwŏn, *Han'guk yusŏnggi ūmban ch'ongmongnok*, p.795; Yi Tongsun, *Pŏnji ōmnŭn chumak*, p.303.

42 Chŏng T'aeyŏng, *Pak Hwasŏng-gwa Yi Nanyŏng*, p.63.

43 Teichiku 50344.

44 Pak Ch'anho, *Han'guk kayosa 1*, p.328.

45 Kim Chip'yŏng, *Han'guk kayo chŏng-shinsa*, p.375; Yi Tongsun, *Pŏnji ōmnŭn chumak*, p.307.

46 Pak Ch'anho, *Han'guk kayosa 2*, pp.19–20.

47 Pak Ch'anho, *Han'guk kayosa 2*, pp.38, 214.

48 The Im Brothers Band was managed by Im Kŭnshik and Im Wŏnshik. The O.M.C. was originally set up by Cho Ch'unyŏng and Yi Chaech'un. Pak Ch'anho, *Han'guk kayosa 2*, pp.21–2, 269; see also Kim Hoyŏn, "Han'guk kŭndae akkŭk yŏn'gu" [A Study of Korean Musicals from the Modern Age] (PhD thesis, Dankook University, 2003), pp.124–26. Another group was The Roses Band 장미악단. When the group performed at the Sudo Theatre in Seoul from 25 to 28 February 1947, it included later K.P.K. members Paek Ŭnsŏn, and dancer Kang Yunbok. Pak Ch'anho, *Han'guk kayosa 2*, p.256.

49 Pak Sŏngsŏ, *Han'guk chŏnjaeng-gwa taejung kayo, kirok-kwa chŭngŏn* [The Korean War and Popular Songs: Records and Images] (Seoul: Ch'aegi innŭn p'unggyŏng, 2010), p.349.

50 Roald Maliangkay, "Supporting Our Boys: American Military Entertainment and Korean Pop Music in the 1950s and early 1960s," in *Korean Pop Music: Riding the Korean Wave*, ed. Keith Howard (Folkestone, Kent: Global Oriental: 2006), p.23.

51 Pak Ch'anho, *Han'guk kayosa 2*, p.168. A picture of Son Mogin performing for the troops on Paengnyŏng Island in 1952 can be found in Pak Sŏngsŏ, *Han'guk chŏnjaeng-gwa taejung kayo, kirok-kwa chŭngŏn*, p.52.

written by Son Mogin. The song, which expressed sorrow over the loss of Korea's autonomy, was one of Okeh's biggest hits, selling over 50 thousand copies.⁴¹ A poll in the magazine *Three Thousand Li* (Samch'ŏlli 三千里) from October 1935 put her in third place as Korea's most popular female singer with 873 votes, behind Wang Subok 王壽福 with 1903 votes and Sŏnuilsŏn 鮮于一扇 with 1166.⁴² In 1936, two years after she represented Korea at a national contest in Tokyo, she toured Japan as Oka Ranko 岡蘭子 and while overseas recorded *Farewell Boat Song* (Ibyŏr-ŭi paennorae 이별의 뱃노래) and *Arirang* (Ariran no uta 아리랑의唄) for Teichiku.⁴³ Soon after she returned to Korea, she performed the song *The Passage of Youth* (Ch'ŏngch'un haehyŏp 青春海峽) alongside Kim Haesong whom she married in 1937.⁴⁴

The C.M.C. performed four homecoming shows at the Pumin'gwan 府民館 in Seoul from 20 June 1939. It is reported that on one night Yi Ch'ŏl caused a stir by appearing on stage saying, "Japs (literally "kedatchak" 게다착) and the like are no match for our Korean Show Band" and was locked in a cell inside the Chongno police station for twenty days.⁴⁵ He died five years later in 1944 and it appears the collective then began to disband. Following Yi's death, Kim Haesong employed some of the group's core members, including his wife Yi Nanyŏng, Pak Shich'un and Nam Insu, to form a separate musical troupe (*akkŭktan*) for the Yakch'o cinema.⁴⁶ In 1946, however, Son Mogin, who for some time had been working in Tianjin, in China, as part of the New Sun Musical Troupe (Shin t'aeyang akkŭktan 新太陽樂劇團),⁴⁷ returned to Korea and reassembled the C.M.C., but by then it had to compete with other show bands. It continued to perform until February 1950 but without any original members as they had all moved on to form their own bands. Among the show bands active around this time were the Im Brothers Band 임형제악단, the Swan Musical Troupe 白鳥樂劇團, the Peninsula Musical Troupe 半島樂劇團 and Cho Ch'unyŏng and Yi Chaech'un's O.M.C.⁴⁸

Catering to Korean and American Nostalgia: The K.P.K.

AFKN (American Forces in Korea Network) began broadcasting on 4 October 1950 inside the Bando Hotel opposite City Hall in central Seoul, where the Lotte Hotel is located today.⁴⁹ Immediately after the war and until 1961, the service would have a significant impact on the attitudes and aspirations of young Koreans. Many of the young students tuning into the station in the early 1950s loved the music, and were keen to learn English and understand the lyrics of the songs. They were an important source of both information and inspiration, and often concerned social issues. Although there was no escaping the harsh reality of everyday life, which saw many people suffer from famine and disease living amongst the rubble of former buildings, the lyrics and the sometimes very expressive forms of music instilled a sense of promise and hope.⁵⁰ In 1961 the Park Chung Hee (Pak Chŏnghŭi 朴正熙) administration (1961–79) established a system of strict censorship that ruled out the possibility of open public debate on sociopolitical issues. Arguably, however, this system eventually led to more indigenous and more politicized forms of pop music.

After the C.M.C. disbanded many of its performers continued to be active in all kinds of ensembles, some of which performed for foreign, largely American, troops.⁵¹ These forces formed an important new audience, but were still made up of relatively young, male soldiers like the Japanese troops had been. The expectations of this audience were, of course, very different. To the

Americans, Korean acts were a compromise at best. Sherrie Tucker argues that when American women came to perform for them, they were “reminders of and even substitutes for their girls back home, as a reward for fighting the war, as embodiments of what they were fighting for”, but even though South Korea had become a US ally in political terms, the Korean performers lacked the common ground to truly solicit such feelings.⁵² What is more, many musicians among the American troops are likely to have felt superior to the Korean professionals, perhaps even more so than they did in Japan.⁵³

In the 1950s the performances venues were vastly different from those organized in Japan. Although they were now on home soil and included a small number of chic clubs, the shows now regularly occurred inside seedy bars and barracks. Here, the artists rarely performed on a proper stage in front of nicely dressed men and women of various ages who had purchased a ticket for the show themselves. Instead, they now often had to appear in front of (and sometimes among) a predominantly young, male audience that would turn up merely hoping to be pleasantly surprised—and who, like the Japanese troops before them, would not have bought their own ticket. The American servicemen were friendly and welcoming, but they had a strong preference for acts with at least one attractive girl. Few would have expected a Korean act to offer much more than “eye candy”, and a couple of songs they knew. This was not simply because many of the acts were mediocre, but also because most of the Americans sent to serve in Korea lacked an understanding of the country’s language and culture, and they would have unthinkingly shared the notion that it lagged behind in overall development.⁵⁴

As the movie *A Flower in Hell* (Chiokhwa 地獄花, dir. Shin Sangok, 1958) shows, performing for the American military sometimes meant lowering one’s standards and developing an aptitude for working with young, often working-class foreign soldiers. Although the movie is fictional, the foreign extras used are undoubtedly US troops, and the setting very much reflects those shown in photographs of the time. The soldiers generally did not care much about lyrics or the quality of a traditionally trained voice, but rather, about the attractiveness and expressiveness of the performance. Although American soldiers may have been unable to discern the different educational levels of the women they met on and around their camps, it must have been unsettling, and perhaps, degrading for the performers that uneducated sex workers were often present during their shows.⁵⁵ (See Figure 3) Many of those performing would have been uncomfortable with the seedy and sexualized conditions of the venues, especially since some of them were university educated and, only a decade earlier, had regularly worked at venues frequented by the elite.

Although they also often performed for Korean audiences, in 1945 Kim Haesong and his wife, along with a number of peers including Chang Sejöng, began entertaining US soldiers. Shin K’anaria 申카나라리아⁵⁶ reminisces,

I recall it was the 18th of October 1945. There was me, Yi Nanyöng, and Chang Sejöng and we sang together but also solo. At that time Yi Nanyöng was already singing an American song in English, though I cannot remember the title.⁵⁷

Some time that year Kim established the K.P.K., an entertainment collective that offered stand-up comedy, dance, operettas, and Western songs as well as rearranged Korean folksongs in a swing-jazz style. The troupe’s first performance was on 2 December 1945. It was called a Grand Show, and included among many others Yi Pongnyong, Kang Yunbok 康

52 Sherrie Tucker, *Swing Shift: ‘All-Girl’ Bands of the 1940s* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), p.229.

53 Taylor Atkins, E, *Blue Nippon*, p.183.

54 Roald Maliangkay, “Supporting Our Boys: American Military Entertainment and Korean Pop Music in the 1950s and early 1960s,” p.22.

55 See Katharine, H.S. Moon, *Sex Among Allies: Military Prostitution in U.S.–Korea Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp.3, 23–24.

56 Born Shin Kyöngnyö 申景女, she was allegedly given the nickname K’anaria (*canaria* = Latin for canary) because of her cute voice. Yi Tongsun, *Pöñji ömmün chumak*, p.375. Pak Ch’anho, *Han’guk kayosa 1*, pp.247–48; Yi Tongsun, *Pöñji ömmün chumak*, p.375.

57 Pak Ch’anho, *Han’guk kayosa 2*, p.24.

Figure 3

A still from the 1958 film
A Flower in Hell (*Chiokhwa*
地獄花). An extract from the film
can be viewed in the online
version of this paper



58 The latter two formations were not new and had also formed part of the C.M.C. when, for example, it performed in Japan in 1940. *Keijō nippō* 16/2/1940: 4; 20/2/1940: 4.

59 Shim was 22 years old at the time. Pak Ch'anho, *Han'guk kayosa* 2, pp.25, 58.

60 Kim Sook-ja, personal communication, Las Vegas, Nov. 2009.

61 Ch'oe Ch'angho, *Minjok sunan'gi-ŭi taejung kayosa*, p.183.

允福, Chang Sejong, Hansŭ Hawaiian Group, Shin K'anaria, the Arirang Boys and the Chŏgori Sisters (with Yi Nanyŏng).⁵⁸ Although these were essentially variety shows, Kim also arranged musicals and operettas. The K.P.K. recorded songs on vinyl, too, and it appears that its recording of the song *The Brother and Sister Who Appeared out of Nothing* (Hŭllŏn nammae 홀러온 남매) was the first record brought out after Liberation. On 9 April 1950 its operetta *Romeo and Juliet* opened at the Shigonggwon 市公館 in central Seoul (today's MyeongDong Theatre 명동예술극장). Appearing in the operetta were, among others, Son Ilp'yŏng 孫一平 in the role of Capulet, Yi Nanyŏng in the role of Romeo, Chang Sejong and Shim Yŏnok 沈蓮玉 as Juliet, and Kim Sŏnyŏng 金善英 as Count Paris.⁵⁹ Kim Haesong's daughter Sook-ja (Sue), told me,

My father was producing *Romeo and Juliet*, and my father was looking for Romeo. He could not find any decent Romeo. So you know what my mother did? She had beautiful long hair; she cut it like a man, like me. She dressed up like Romeo and walked into my father's office, "You just found Romeo". I remember, her practicing dance, day and night. Then she played Don José in *Carmen*. She played it, as a man. They were so dedicated to the stage.⁶⁰

Some two months after the opening of *Romeo and Juliet*, North Korea invaded, and although it is reported that Kim told his wife and children to seek shelter while he initially stayed behind in Seoul, Sook-ja told me the whole family struggled to survive in Seoul at least for some time, with her mother even performing for the North Koreans on a few occasions. She remembered that her father was once taken away by North Korean soldiers, but, it is reported, that on the recommendation of someone who had worked for the culture office of the North Korean Military Front Command (Chŏnsŏn chigu saryŏngbu 전선지구사령부) in Seoul in 1950 Kim joined the Social Stability Military Band (Sahoe anjŏnsŏng kunaktae 사회안전성군악대), along with Yi Kyunam 李圭南, and that, eventually, he died of tuberculosis after crossing over to the North.⁶¹ Another rumour has it that villagers demolished the Kims' house out of anger over Kim's defection, but Sook-ja told me that this, too, was not true. She explained that the family remained in Seoul in 1951 and that

**Figure 4**

The Kim sisters performing at an army base in Taegu

on one occasion the North Koreans locked up her mother in a cave at the bottom of Namsan for four or five days, along with some seventeen others.

Before the loss of her husband, Yi had already begun training and managing her children, wanting them to turn professional, but she recognized that the girls had more commercial potential than the boys. Although they did not speak English and, according to Sook-ja, “didn’t even know where America was”, they were taught mostly English songs, the first being *Ole Buttermilk Sky*, a country and western song. (*The online version of this paper includes audio of Sook-ja Kim talking about the repertoire.*) Their uncle Yi Pongnyong was asked to write songs for them, and these added to a rich repertoire that included several “Oriental” songs, American songs such as *Charlie Brown* and *When the Saints Go Marching In*, as well as Korean folksongs including *Arirang*, *Fallen Blossoms on a Stream* (Nakhwa yusu 落花流水), *Bellflower Song* (Toraji t’aryŏng 도라지타령), and *Song of Spring* (Pom norae 봄노래, credited to Kim Haesong).

The Kim Sisters act, which began around the start of the Korean War, first involved the girls Sook-ja 淑子, Ai-ja 愛子 and Young-ja 英子, but the latter was replaced with their uncle’s daughter Min-ja 敏子 (Mia) when the girls signed a contract with a nightclub in Las Vegas around 1958. Yi brought the girls along when she went to the American clubs to sing, and the girls’ act soon became the highlight of the show (see Figure 4). At some point in 1951, Yi Nanyŏng moved her family to Pusan 釜山, where she began managing the K.P.K., which was then renamed the Yi Nanyŏng Band. Among the members were Chang Sejøng, Kang Yunbok and her husband, tapdancer Chŏn Haenam 田海男, and Yi’s daughters Sook-ja, Ai-ja and Young-ja.⁶² Sook-ja told me:

[It was] a left-over band from my father. All the GIs hungered for all the songs. They were a long way from America and I could see how lonely they were. And my mother tried to make them feel at home. She even helped them. These guys came all the way from America. We needed to entertain them. So it was a perfect idea of her, but without my father, she had to do it by herself. Thirty, forty people, and then we’d go to, you know, a GI Club and perform, and the USO Show. Then we started singing for them.

⁶² Kang Yunbok and Chŏn Haenam also performed for the Oasis Grand Show on 26 August 1956. Pak Ch’anho, *Han’guk kayosa 2*, pp.25, 249; Pak Sŏngsŏ, *Han’guk chŏnjaeng-gwa taejung kayo*, p.295.

63 Pak Ch'anho, *Han'guk kayosa 2*, p.26.

64 Pak Ch'anho, *Han'guk kayosa 2*, p.28.

65 Roald Maliangkay, "Supporting Our Boys," pp.25–26.

66 Pak Söngsö, *Han'guk cbönjaeng-gwa taejung kayo*, p.44; Roald Maliangkay, "Pop for Progress: South Korea's Propaganda Songs," in *Korean Pop Music: Riding the Korean Wave*, ed. Keith Howard (Folkestone, Kent: Global Oriental: 2006), p.51.

Together we did it. It was a tent; there were a lot of tents. We would ride for two-and-a-half, sometimes many hours; there was no road. It was all rocks [...]. Sometimes the driver, the GI was drunk, and he'd go like 60, 70 miles an hour. And we were so little. We wore parkas, with fur, but all the dust came in, so when you got off the truck nobody recognised you. And one time we fell off and we almost died. And I remember that one time it was so cold that we were frozen in the truck and we couldn't get up, so the GI literally carried us out and took us to the fireplace. We had to melt. And we cried, it was so cold. And yet, we had to perform; we wanted to perform. So we'd sit in front of the fireplace and warmed up, and then we went to perform. But we just had to do that, to survive, you know. If we didn't do that, we wouldn't eat. So we had no choice.

Soon after returning to Seoul, on 26 October 1953, Yi arranged a show called *Rhapsody of Paebaengi* (Paebaengi kwangsanggok 배뱅이광상곡) at the Peace Theatre (P'yöngghwa kükchang 평화극장), with folksong specialist Yi Ŭn'gwan, well-known for his rendition of the one-man folk opera *Ritual for Paebaengi* (Paebaengi kut 배뱅이굿), in the leading role.⁶³ Since the war left most family networks either disrupted or destroyed, for the majority of people regular employment was the only way to secure a livelihood. Similar show bands and variety collectives continued to form,⁶⁴ but it appears that the demand far exceeded the supply. It is likely that in the 1950s many Koreans sought employment as entertainers out of desperation rather than any artistic ambition, so the quality of many acts would have been low.⁶⁵

Because of their great musical talent and unbridled optimism, the Kim Sisters managed to win the hearts of many a young GI. Apart from the musical and performing talent of the girls, their Korean accents and traditional costume proved endearing. By 1958, around the time it appears the Yi Nanyöng Band discontinued its activities, the Americans had begun to give them the nickname "the Korean Andrews Sisters". Other all-girl acts quickly followed suit, but whereas the Kim Sisters were able to play many instruments very well, competing acts relied on their physical appeal only. It is reported that around this time, Tom Ball, manager of the China Doll Review in the Thunderbird Hotel in Las Vegas, travelled to Korea to meet the girls and having watched them perform, drew up a \$400 contract for them to perform in his club. Following their migration to the US, the girls performed on major stages in cities across the country, and recorded several albums and singles. At the summit of their success, they regularly appeared on TV, including the popular Dinah Shore, Dean Martin and Hollywood shows. Their audience often included a considerable number of Korean Americans, for whom the girls' cute and energetic medley of positive all-American and Korean songs had nostalgic value, and it was for them in particular that the girls continued to wear traditional dress (*hanbok* 韓服) and sing Korean folksongs.

On 16 May 1961, the South Korean government banned songs written by defectors,⁶⁶ which meant that the part of Yi Nanyöng's repertoire composed by her husband could no longer be performed without it representing an act of political defiance, despite the fact that Yi blamed North Korea for taking her husband and supported the migration of many of her relatives to the US. It is said that she had fallen in love with singer Nam Insu around 1957 and had eventually moved in with him, but he died in 1962. Not wanting to be alone, she went to visit her daughters in the US, but returned to Korea in 1963. Soon after, she sent three of her sons to join their sisters in the US with a separate act called The Kim Brothers. There are no reports of her band being active again, but she continued to perform as a solo vocalist.

Her children eventually all migrated to the US, with no plans to return. Both The Kim Sisters and The Kim Brothers returned to Seoul on a few occasions to perform alongside their mother, but visa issues sometimes frustrated their return. Possibly also because of the social stigma that her husband's captors had indirectly bestowed on her, Yi herself continued to spend a considerable amount of time visiting her children in the US. She died on 17 April 1965 at the age of 49, at Sook-ja's house in Seoul under suspicious circumstances.⁶⁷ Sook-ja told me she was unable to attain a visa to attend her mother's funeral because her father was still considered a defector.

Conclusion

The emphasis in this article has been on the conditions under which the C.M.C. and the K.P.K. gave their performances, including the aspirations of both the performers and their audiences, with a view to revealing how the complex phenomenon of Occidentalism may have been manifested before and after the Korean War. It would, however, be wrong to ignore the genuine appreciation the artists and audiences had for the music itself, or to treat the performances as mere avenues for the expression of ideas, for they would have no persuasive power without the music and the peripheral aspects of the music that added to its appeal, such as fashion and the association with a popular movie or form of dance. Although everyday living and working conditions were undoubtedly a major source of inspiration for the songs, perhaps as much as social status and sociopolitical ideologies, ultimately it would have been the music that inspired the Kims and the other performers they worked with.

When comparing the activities of the C.M.C. and K.P.K., some similarities in their work for foreign troops can be found. The two collectives operated in a subservient role, culturally and politically, catering to the likes (and dislikes) of their employers. However, performing for foreign military forces also constituted a measure of accomplishment, if a small one, considering that in order to earn a living and secure future work, declining "invitations" was no option. The shows the collectives performed had elements of nostalgia both for the foreign servicemen who sometimes knew the original versions of songs, and for those who dreamed of a life beyond the violence and oppression of colonial rule and war. Traditional Korean elements served to remind the audiences of the performers' cultural roots, and they could underpin nationalist sentiments with Korean and foreign audiences, based on a feeling of pride and an either romantic or positivist Orientalist view respectively. Modern music, on the other hand, was an equally significant sign of accomplishment because it was associated with contemporary West-



Figure 5

A record shop in the US advertising the girls' first album

⁶⁷ Kim Sook-ja, personal communication, Las Vegas, Nov. 2009. Pak Ch'anho gives 11 April as the date of her death. See Pak Ch'anho, *Han'guk kayosa 1*, pp.360–61. Yi Pongnyong migrated to America in 1973, but he died in Seoul on 9 January 1987 during a visit. Chōng T'aeyōng, *Pak Hwasōng-gwa Yi Nanyōng*, p.44.

68 Pak Sang Mi, "The Making of a Cultural Icon for the Japanese Empire: Choe Seung-hui's U.S. Dance Tours and "New Asian Culture" in the 1930s and 1940s," p.606.

69 Shunya Yoshimi, "'America' as Desire and Violence: Americanization in Post-war Japan and Asia during the Cold War," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 4.3 (2003): 433–50, at pp.441, 443.

ern culture, which, due to the fact that it was considered a yardstick at least in modern entertainment, acted as another possible stimulus of nationalist sentiment.

There were, however, also some notable differences between the C.M.C. and K.P.K. performances. When it performed in Japan the C.M.C. made use of Japan's association with its Korean colony as a culturally related, but plausibly less advanced neighbour.⁶⁸ Many Japanese apparently enjoyed the performances, but there seems to have been an emphasis on traditional forms of music. While the C.M.C. also performed modern songs, the Japanese authorities would likely have wanted to ensure that Korean performers did not appear to represent the latest developments in popular music, and the collective may not have wanted to compete with Japanese acts. Unfortunately, many details about these performances are missing, but we can safely assume that while a Japanese audience might have recognised the Koreans' talent and the quality of their music, they may also have regarded the show as a sign of Japan's effective colonization of Korea. In addition, the C.M.C. performances may have been viewed as a Korean attempt to emulate Japan's successful adoption and redefinition of specific aspects of Western culture. Korean audiences, on the other hand, would have regarded the modern elements in the shows as a successful and more direct emulation of Western culture.

The K.P.K.'s shows for the American military, as well as those by The Kim Sisters, provide a stronger case for the study of the phenomenon of Occidentalism. They included a much greater proportion of Western songs and demonstrated a fondness for Western music, dance and fashion. Shunya Yoshimi notes the US was not associated with violence in South Korea (unlike in Japan),⁶⁹ and indeed, many young South Koreans avidly and unquestioningly followed all kinds of American trends throughout the 1950s. In their predominantly modern shows, the K.P.K. sometimes highlighted their Korean origins, allowing Korean audiences to experience a degree of pride over their compatriots' talent for Western music, and Americans (who would have commonly regarded the shows as second rate) pride in their cultural superiority. Although the American forces were generally keen to employ them, the venues where the Korean singers, musicians and dancers were expected to perform were often of low quality, and rather seedy and undignified. The larger camp shows and the cities' more prestigious clubs, on the other hand, constituted venues where performers could truly emulate the talent, showmanship, and splendour of the shows they had initially come to know about mostly through movies. They may have reminded some of them of the chic, sophisticated settings of many clubs during the colonial period. Opportunities to perform on stages like these continued to inspire many Korean performers, whose love for the new various forms of music went unabated despite the many hardships faced.

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