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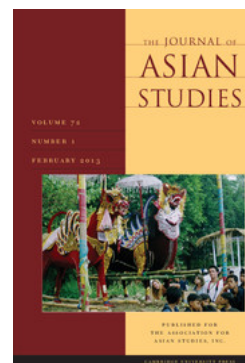
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***SamulNori: Contemporary Korean Drumming and the Rebirth of Itinerant Performance Culture.* By Nathan Hesselink. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012. xiv, 201 pp, 1 audio CD. \ \$75.00 (cloth); \ \$27.50 (paper).**

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The Journal of Asian Studies / Volume 72 / Issue 01 / February 2013, pp 213 - 215

DOI: 10.1017/S0021911812002100, Published online: 18 March 2013

Link to this article: http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0021911812002100

How to cite this article:

Keith Howard (2013). The Journal of Asian Studies, 72, pp 213-215 doi:10.1017/S0021911812002100

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coercion that it often assumes...Empowering the cabinet's agenda (of reform) is a more effective way to achieve American and South Korean policy goals than is trying to strong-arm a country that is deeply entrenched against military moves and has an isolated economy relatively immune to sanctions." (pp. 230, 252) Rather than coercive policies that may provide fodder to claims about American hostility, he advocates soft power strategies such as providing information by radio broadcasts, increasing access to cell phones with capacity for international calls, encouraging business interests, and supporting people-to-people exchanges through foreign travel and non governmental initiatives.

Both books provide material for comparative research with distinctive explanations of North Korea's reforms and policy changes in the last decade, including useful quantitative data based on surveys of North Korean refugees (despite acknowledged problems with their reliability) and close qualitative readings of the North Korean press.¹² Those in policy circles seeking specific recommendations would certainly find the books helpful as they seem to be written with them in mind. However, both books must seriously engage with McEachern's observation that marketization resulted in "an unsavory side effect of rewarding those who violated the law and put vulnerable populations at greater risk of starvation" (p. 184). Moreover, the lack of deeper reflection about potential translation and language issues in both works leaves them open to theoretical and empirical critique.¹³

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SamulNori: Contemporary Korean Drumming and the Rebirth of Itinerant Performance Culture. By NATHAN HESSELINK. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012. xiv, 201 pp, 1 audio CD. \$75.00 (cloth); \$27.50 (paper).
doi:10.1017/S0021911812002100

Nathan Hesselink's book explores a contemporary Korean percussion ensemble, SamulNori, and the genre it has spawned, *samul nori*. The four musicians of SamulNori, playing two drums and two gongs, gave their first performance in 1978. Today, the genre is singularly popular, and has become the default form of Korea's age-old percussion bands on national and international stages. SamulNori first took to the stage as part of a larger group dedicated to finding new ways of staging folk music, and within four years they had established a set of relatively fixed pieces that today has canonical status. They soon embarked on a punishing schedule of highly visible international

¹²As the authors themselves acknowledge, refugees do not represent a random sample of the North Korean population but a particularly disaffected segment of North Korean society that chose to leave. The northeast provinces are overrepresented as the worst affected areas of the famine and in close proximity to the border with China. Refugees are also prone to exaggerate their education, occupation and social status as a way to enhance their value in South Korea.

¹³Surveys were administered entirely in Korean by the authors' South Korean research partners as the authors themselves lack the requisite language skills. North Korean press materials used by McEachern were translations from the original Korean by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, renamed the Open Source Center in 2005.

tours, and grew a fan base not dissimilar to those of pop stars. By 1987 they had established a collaboration with an Austrian/American jazz group, Red Sun, that lasted a further decade. They developed a pedagogical method, complemented by notations and workbooks. They worked with rap musicians, Korean folk singers, with pianists, zither players, both Western and Korean orchestras, and with shaman ritualists. They established a foundation, sponsored a biennial festival, and recorded many albums. Their music formed the basis of stage shows, most notably *Cookin' (Nanta)*, and was blown up to epic proportions for the opening and closing ceremonies of the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games.

There is, then, no doubt that a thorough account of the ensemble and the genre it spawned is long overdue. Although a considerable amount has been published in Korea, English readers have to date been restricted to a couple of PhD dissertations and a few articles, plus three inadequate chapters in one of my own books.¹⁴ Hesselink leads us through the story with an account rich in history, aesthetics and analysis—with his exploration of specific *samul nori* repertoire illustrated by an excellent audio CD. He is always sensitive to Korean voices, matching interviews with musicians to journalistic reports and to a raft of pedagogical volumes and academic publications. Overall, the author's greatest strength is his ability to effortlessly blend recent anthropological and ethnomusicological theory with ethnographic data and, by doing so but unlike many regionally embedded accounts, he provides a bridge between the familiar and unfamiliar that will surely allow the volume to become standard reading.

The volume is divided into five chapters, topped and tailed by an introduction and conclusion. After setting the scene, the first chapter explores the itinerant troupes that in some incarnations were known as *namsadang*. SamulNori are positioned as a continuation of such troupes. Hesselink is heavily dependent on the accounts of one particular scholar, Shim Usŏng¹⁵ who had developed his account through interviewing survivors of *namsadang* in the 1950s and 1960s; there is extremely scant historical data. Given that most commentators tend to see SamulNori as the inheritors of a broader percussion band tradition known as *nongak* or *p'ungmul*, and of local and regional styles as much as the itinerant tradition, this repositions our understanding. The second chapter takes us to the 1970s, a time when the state preservation system positioned “folk” music as an icon of identity, and a time of rapid expansion in Korea's concert culture. Hesselink explores three large halls that were built during the decade, and we hear how Shim and others, latterly including SamulNori, wanted smaller, more intimate spaces, and found them in the performance and exhibition venue, Konggan (Space), set up by an intellectual group led by the prominent architect Kim Sugŭn.

Chapter 3 arrives at SamulNori's music, and explores one single rhythm, the “five beat road rhythm” (*och'ae chilgut*), through Christopher Small's filters of locations, performers and audiences.¹⁶ Hesselink opens with the rhythm as he was taught it by the regional percussion band of Iri in North Chŏlla Province,¹⁷ and moves via the rhythm

¹⁴Keith Howard, *Creating Korean Music: Tradition, Innovation and the Discourse of Identity* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2006), pp.1–70.

¹⁵In an earlier publication he had already translated an extended discussion by Shim. See Nathan Hesselink, *P'ungmul: South Korean Drumming and Dance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

¹⁶Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Hanover, N.H.: Wesleyan University Press, 1998), pp. 194–96.

¹⁷See Nathan Hesselink, “The formation of *Namsadang* (Korean itinerant performer) Troupes: Chapter One of *A Study of Namsadang Troupes* by Shim Usŏng,” *Acta Koreana* 9/2 (2006): pp. 31–57.

as played by the *samul nori* quartet at the state-sponsored National Gugak Center at a later time to SamulNori's rendition. Arguably this could be turned on its head, to give the SamulNori rendition precedence, since it has the greatest pedigree. Chapter 4 builds an aesthetic for SamulNori, one built on geomantic and Taoist principles found in Chinese philosophy that has over time become vital to their pedagogy and performances. The geomantic trinity of square-circle-triangle, one within another, becomes a way to visualize *samul nori* rhythmic patterns as *wŏn-pang-kak* or pattern-beat grouping-beat—although not mentioned here, something familiar to students of Korean musicology through the teachings of its sadly departed elder statesman, Lee Hye-Ku.

Chapter 5 shifts to the jazz collaborations of SamulNori. Core to these was the ten-year association between SamulNori and Red Sun, which resulted in four albums. Hesselink reviews these, showing how they evolved, the first leaving jazz as jazz and SamulNori as *samul nori*, the last blending the two much more successfully while rooting each piece in repertoire associated with Korea's different regional percussion bands.

The concluding chapter, while reflecting on SamulNori/*samul nori* thirty-five years on from its first appearance, manages to take a critical look at the South Korean preservation movement, arguing for evolution and development rather than the maintenance of unchanging "traditional" forms. This, while sensibly arguing against the UNESCO activities for intangible cultural heritage, and against the Korean top-down approach to preservation appears slightly ironic: the canonical pieces of *samul nori* allow little space for evolution and development, and in 2012 they continue to be performed virtually unchanged from the way they were thirty years ago.

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In the Tree: Selected Poems of Kim Hyung-Young. Edited with introduction, translation, and commentary by CHAN E. PARK. *Songs of Thorns and Flowers: Bilingual Performance and Discourse on Modern Korean Poetry*, vol. 1. Columbus: Foreign Language Publications, The Ohio State University, 2010. 115 pp. (includes DVD insert). \$15.95 (paper).

There Remain Words to Say: Selected Poems by Yoo An-Jin. Edited with introduction, translation, and commentary by CHAN E. PARK. *Songs of Thorns and Flowers: Bilingual Performance and Discourse on Modern Korean Poetry*, vol. 2. Columbus: Foreign Language Publications, The Ohio State University, 2011. 117 pp. (includes DVD insert) \$15.95 (paper).
doi:10.1017/S0021911812002112

Part literary translation and part language workbook, video documentary, and musical performance (provided on accompanying DVDs), each volume in *Songs of Thorns and Flowers: Bilingual Performance and Discourse on Modern Korean Poetry*, orchestrated by Chan E. Park, reflects the various aims of this new series: to make a pedagogical contribution to the study of Korean language and literature, to "explore the performativity of modern Korean poetic language" (*In the Tree*, p. 14) to provide a lens through which to understand Korean history and culture, and to honor the legacy of