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Introduction to the Special Issue

Musics of Co-Eval East Asia

Hyun Kyong Hannah Chang

A number of scholars in critical Asian Studies have pointed out the persistent construction of East Asia as the perennial Other across Anglophone humanities.[1] They have cited ideologies that continue to motivate the othering of East Asia: from orientalism, an attribute of European and U.S. imperialisms, to postwar Boasian culturalism, which emerged as a kind of critique of cultural standardization brought on by Western imperialisms.[2] It would be an exaggeration to say that current Anglophone scholarship on the music of East Asia overtly partakes in the Othering practices of the past, but the legacies nevertheless continue to shape the epistemic ground of this scholarship in subtle ways. This is evident for instance in the ways that knowledge has been framed and organized in reference books, textbooks, and syllabi where 'East Asian' music are remarked primarily as local traditions situated within and representative of nations. It is difficult to paint the terrain of recent research in broad strokes; however, a constructivist strain has continued to tether East Asian music to pre-assigned conceptions of difference within a 'static dualism of identity and difference.'[3] In this framework, there is a greater critical recognition that the 'traditional' in twentieth century music is fully reconstituted within the economies of nationalism and globalization (benevolent or otherwise they may be), but scholars typically stop short of unmooring music from its indexical tethering to ethnic or

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[1] Naoki Sakai, 'Theory and Asian humanity: On the Question of Humanitas and Anthropos', *Postcolonial Studies* 13/4 (2010); Kuan-Hsing Chen, *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Shu-mei Shih, 'Racializing Area Studies, Defetishizing China', *positions asia critique* 27/1 (2019).
[2] See Etienne Balibar, 'Is There a "Neo-Racism"?', in Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (New York and London: Verso, 1991), 17-28.
[3] Lisa Lowe, *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), 7.

national identity.[4] This means that the literature continues to be beholden to received definitions of 'Chinese', 'Japanese', and 'Korean' music, and with these, a preoccupation with distinct origins.

One consequence of such disciplinary legacy is that it reinforces the perception that East Asian music was and is isolated from other parts of the world. This perception belies this region's embeddedness in the colonial-modern world. In particular, it leaves unaccounted the multifaceted connections between East Asia and Europe / North America , after the expansion of the modern/colonial structures in the nineteenth century (and it should be noted that even before modern imperialism made a global village out of the world, there were other trans-regional exchanges.)[5] To understand how resolutely distinct East Asia (and Asia in general) has remained in Anglophone academic and popular imagination despite such long histories of exchange, it may be instructive to compare it to treatment of regions that have been marked by trans-Atlantic connections, such as among Africa, Latin America, North America, and Europe. This is not to compare interregional dynamics that have been affected by different scales and topographies of power relations but to pose the question of why East Asia's separation, distinctness, and uniqueness have been such persistent presumptions in Anglophone music studies. The academic gaze on East Asia has continued to look like a 'view from nowhere', to borrow from anthropologists Judith Irvine and Susan Gal, when it actually reflects a thoroughly Euro-American selective view on certain kinds of traditions at the expense of others.[6] While Anglophone musical studies have certainly moved past notions of timeless national traditions to

[4] For an insightful critique, see Nicholas Tochka, 'To "Enlighten and Beautify": Western Music and the Modern Project of Personhood in Albania, c. 1906-1924', *Ethnomusicology* 59/3 (2015), 398-420.
[5] For research on this, see, for example, Makoto Harris Takao, '"In Their Own Way": Contrafactal Practices in Japanese Christian Communities during the 16th Century', *Early Music* 47/2 (2019).
[6] Judith T. Irvine and Susan Gal, 'Language Ideology and Linguistic Differentiation', in Paul V. Kroskrity, *Regimes of Language: Ideologies, Politics, and Identities* (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 2000), 35.

deconstruct such traditions, musical histories in East Asia are nevertheless stuck within national time, denying their co-evalness and embeddedness in other systems.[7] (cite Fabian)

This special issue offers articles that highlight East Asia's position as an area that has co-existed within the time and the space of the colonial-modern world. The contributors treat various intersections and trajectories involving different forms of Western music in twentieth-century East Asia. The focus on Western music is not intended to validate the universality of this music or to subscribe to fantasies of music's colorblindness and transcendence. Instead, the value of this focus lies in what it tells us about East Asia's transformations in the twentieth century. Importantly, it tells us about a history of unequal globalization that traces back to the 'opening' of China, Japan, and Korea by Western powers, symbolized in historiography through events such as the Opium Wars (1839-42; 1856-60), Commodore Perry's gunboat diplomacy in Japan (1853), and the U.S. expedition to Korea (1871), among others. It also tells us about the ensuing projects of nation-building and modern personhood across East Asia in the course of the first half of the twentieth century. These projects heralded the circulation, uptake, and appropriation of Western music (see Hon-Lun Helan Yang's article), though not always from Western powers. In this historical telling, the role of Japan as a regional empire with influence on East and Southeast Asia is also worth underscoring. Japan's colonial institutions propelled a network of musical activities and texts intra-regionally; often, these involved hybrid musical forms building on Western art or popular music.[8] In these processes, 'new' music linked cultural legitimacy and social mobility with categories of gender, class, and region. Such musical circulations also

[7] See Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Objects* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

[8] Japan colonized Okinawa in 1879, Taiwan in 1895 and Korea in 1910. It also had colonial ambitions in China as attested by the Sino-Japanese War (1894-5;1937-45). Beginning in the 1930s, the Japanese empire competed with European empires and the United States for colonies in Southeast Asia.

facilitated certain connections, solidarities, and friendships as well as new vernaculars that became meaningful for communities tackling new challenges. Yet it is important to underline that these intra-Asian connections were being forged through Western musical forms/genres, not so-called traditional forms.

The kinds of inter- and intra-regional trajectories constitute one framework of co-evalness from which one could conceptualize past and contemporary musical cultures in Japan, Korea, and China (and more broadly, the Sinophone world). In this regard, it is interesting to note that even for regimes where postwar nationalism and the Cold War have promoted policies of self-isolation—for example, the PRC during the Cultural Revolution and North Korea after the Korean War—it is still impossible to disown their mixed musical influences from before 1945 (see contributions by Xintong Lu and Stephen Johnson). In Japan and South Korea, countries allied with the United States after 1945, active exchanges at individual and state levels deepened already existing transborder musical practices (see contributions by Hyun Kyong Hannah Chang and Serena Yang).

Contributors of this special issue tackle musical cultures in different locations in East Asia and at different points in the twentieth century. Hon-Lun Helan Yang's contribution examines Western art music in interwar Shanghai. Shanghai was one of a number of port cities in East Asia forced open by European and U.S. gunboat diplomacy in the nineteenth century. As Yang details, by the 1920s, a colonial social order that had been enforced by American and British settlers in Shanghai co-existed with rising Chinese nationalism and the arrival of Russians fleeing the Revolution. Yang considers how Western art music in this milieu reverberated with colonial, nationalist, and cosmopolitan ideologies and argues that Chinese musicians' performances of this music negotiated these ideologies.

Xintong Liu takes us to a historic moment in Cold-War Sino-U.S. relations: the Philadelphia Orchestra's China tour in 1973, the seventh year of the Cultural Revolution. This tour, little known today, departs from usual images of musical life during the Cultural Revolution, such as the model operas (*yangbanxi*) and the purging of Western music. More than an examination of an under-explored musical event, Liu's study critiques the tendency in scholarship to depict such government-initiated orchestral tours as state-level diplomacy. Liu shows how this orchestral tour relied on unplanned on-the-ground negotiations among individual politicians and musicians on both sides as well as on transnational musical connections made prior to the Cultural Revolution. She also makes a fresh analytical intervention by using the Chinese philosophy of *li* (etiquette/ritual) to conceptualize Sino-U.S. musical diplomacy.

Stephen Johnson's article builds on a critical and contextualized analysis of form to shed light on the significance of North Korean revolutionary operas, a repertory championed by Kim Jong-il in the 1970s as the embodiment of its *juche* ('self-reliance') ideology. He focuses on *chŏlga* (stanzaic song), a simple strophic binary form that serves as the building block of revolutionary operas. Johnson points out that despite *chŏlga*'s centrality to this repertory, it is judged to have little value when seen through Western artistic criteria such as originality and complexity. He therefore reexamines *chŏlga* from the perspectives of the Korean history of colonialism and Kim Jong-il's own treatise on opera, in this process uncovering this form's grounding in hybrid popular music in Japan-colonized Korea (1910-45).

My article explores a musical practice in a symbolic site of South Korea-U.S. alliance: Protestant South Korean diaspora in the United States. It is based on my ethnography of a diasporic choir in Southern California, made up of members who immigrated to the United States sometime between the 1960s and the 1980s. I document these singers' preference for

unmarked European-style choral music with Korean lyrics over ‘neotraditional’ pieces that incorporate the aesthetics of suffering found in certain Korean traditional vocal genres. I argue that their musical judgment must be understood against the backdrop of shared memories around the radical inequality between the United States and South Korea that was hardened during the Cold War. The article depicts how many choir members were unwilling to vocalize neotraditional tropes of suffering because of their associations with Koreans’ traumatic experiences of colonialism and the Korean War.

Serena Yang’s contribution is an essay on the contemporaneity of avant-garde musical practices in the United States (New York, specifically) and Japan in the 1960s. Japan was a regional center of modernity from the late nineteenth century to the end of WWII, and a number of Japanese artists studied or performed in France, Germany, and the United States during this time, in this process creating particular trajectories of artistic influence and exchange. Yang focuses on postwar Japan and documents the emergence of an avant-garde music scene in this milieu. In retelling the story of this scene, she deconstructs the myth that John Cage had a singular impact. As she argues, the Japanese artists in this scene, usually associated with Jikken Kōbō and Group Ongaku, refined their ongoing artistic practices through exchanges with Cage and interpreted the American composer’s work through their existing ideas, rather than being products of Cagean experimentalism. Yang’s contribution reminds us to be cautious of the tendency to assume non-Western artistic movements as ‘belated’ or ‘derivative’ in the historiography of Western art music.

Most of the articles in this special issue were first presented at the special session of the Global East Asian Music Studies Group at the American Musicological Society meeting in Boston in 2019. I am grateful to Gavin Lee for convening this session and inviting me as a

respondent. A project like this of course does not develop in a vacuum. It is inspired by the recent surge of interest in global music historiographies within Anglophone music studies[9]; by already well-established scholarships and innovative projects on the topic of Western music in East Asia in East Asia[10]; and by critical Asian studies including inter-Asia cultural studies[11]. I also acknowledge an intellectual debt to a number of Asian American women in musicology who have written about the dangers of orientalism and racialization[12] and who have pioneered critical global/transnational perspectives on music of East Asia.[13]

The questions that the contributions of this special issue raise seek to rethink issues of agency, power, authenticity, and scale within ethno/musicological studies involving different parts of East Asia. These questions also hopefully encourage more music scholars to interrogate the boundary between ethnomusicology and musicology. This divide has come under criticism in the recent years for separating the world into a West/Rest binary and for upholding methodological biases that ultimately mean a denial of history and historicity to the non-Western world. This special issue hopes to contribute to this recent intervention by pointing to the need to locate East Asia firmly in the modern-colonial world.

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[9] Consider, for example, the inauguration of the Global Music History Study Group and the Global East Asian Music Study Group in the American Musicological Society in the last several years. Also see Olivia Bloechl, 'Editorial', *Eighteen-Century Music* 17/2 (2020).

[10] Consider, for example, digital database projects at the Ewha Music Research Institute at Ewha Woman's University (Seoul) and at the Graduate Institute of Musicology at the National Taiwan University.

[11] Refer to footnote 1.

[12] Nina Eidsheim, *Measuring Race: the Micropolitics of Listening to Vocal Timbre and Vocality in African-American Popular Music* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019); Elie M. Hisama, 'Postcolonialism on the Make: the Music of John Mellencamp, David Bowie and John Zorn', *Popular Music* 12/2 (1993).

[13] See, for example, Nancy Rao, *Chinatown Opera Theater in North America* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2017); Noriko Manabe, 'Globalization and Japanese Creativity: Adaptation of Japanese Language to Rap', *Ethnomusicology* 50/1 (2006).

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