

Special Feature

The Music Trend in the 15th century
Korea Shown in the Written Materials
of Seong Hyeon

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Introduction

Seong Hyeon 成倪 (1439-1504), born in the 21st year of King Sejong's reign, was a high class male bureaucrat who served many governmental positions and left a wide range of books during the reign of King Sejo and King Seongjong. Seong had a profound knowledge on music and by himself greatly enjoyed *geomungo* throughout his life. Supervising Jangakwon (Royal Music Institute 掌樂院) as an officer in the royal palace, Seong guided and led the publication of *Akhakgwebeom* 樂學軌範, which compiled the musical theories and cannon of court rite music.¹ Seong's knowledge and experience on music are indicated in some writings.

...when (he) was young, Seong learned to play *geomungo* along with his friends and realized the mysterious beauty of music while at the same time understood the theories of musical structure, and thus worked as the director of Jangakwon for about 20 years. Seong was credited for his literary writings and, under the word of King Seongjong, could accomplish the texts for the vocal part of court rite music. The tablature code for *geomungo* as well as the book *Akhakgwebeom* could be completed thanks to the Seong's profound knowledge on music, and therefore he was praised to be the specialist or the master of music of the time.²

The 15th century is described as the Golden Age of Korean music history. With the change of dynasty, musical traditions of the Goryeo dynasty underwent periods of acceptance, change, and reinvention. Efforts by King Sejong and King Sejo created the conditions to properly pass down national music practices, and ceremonial court music enjoyed its high time during King Seongjong's reign (Lee 2000, 34; Song 2000b, 2014). Jangakwon unified all musical institutes and established styles and rules of Confucian musical theory as well as ceremonial court music and dance to be properly performed and shared with the royal court and among government officials.

A culture of literati playing the *geomungo* as daily appreciation of arts and culture was growing in those days. A tradition of four types of arts—*geomungo*, chess, calligraphy, and painting—was widely recommended to literati for cultural refinement since the previous dynasty. With this four arts tradition now influenced by the cultural habits of the upper class, whose ideals were based on Confucian thought, performing the *geomungo* was perceived through the viewpoint of the balance between academic and arts, as if one reached the point of ideally neutral harmony (Yun 2015).

Seong Hyeon, who was born in a high class reputable family at the height of music culture, thus learned the *geomungo*. Upon entering public service, he was known as “the official who knows music,” resulting in him overseeing the affairs of Jangakwon. He further composed the “Jangakwonjemyeonggi” 掌樂院題名記. Seong also participated in the publication of the *Akhakgwebeom* and wrote its preface. He further developed the *hapjajibeop*, the tablature and notation code system for the *geomungo*. Using this system, he also compiled the *Hyeongeumhapjaboseo* 玄琴合字譜序 including his work entitled “Hyeongeumhapjabo” 玄琴合字譜. As a government official, Seong left many documents of various ceremonial music and banquets, as well as his observations of the musical events of China and local governments. His personal daily feelings and thoughts in relation to the *geomungo* and musical occasions that he experienced by participating in various banquets and poetry readings, as well as his critic reviews of the musicians and music pieces he encountered, are presented in his essay books *Heobaekdangjip* 虛白堂集 and *Yongjaechonghwa* 慵齋叢話.

So far, research about Seong Hyeon's work has been limited to an analysis of the *Akhakgwebeom*, study of the *Hyeongeumhapjabo* (Song 1997), and character research by Lee Hye-ku (Song 1997; J. Song 2009, 39-49). The contents of these researches are briefly represented in the works of Korean music history by Lee Hye-ku (1974), Jang Sahun (1986), Song Bangsong (2007), and Song Hye-jin (2016). However, interest in the music and dance introduced in the *Heobaekdangjip*, either directly or indirectly, was but a little so far. Given Seong's affection towards music, his expertise, and broad experience in the field, I believe that Seong's records on the establishment of national music and developing new aspects of fellow literati's musical enjoyment need to be revisited under the viewpoint of 15th century music history.

This paper explores the 15th century music culture as it is reflected in Seong's body of work. In order to do so, it is notable that his records

1. Seong Hyeon's *Akhakgwebeom* has been translated into modern Korean-language along with annotations by Lee Hye-ku and published as a title *Sinyeok Akhakgwebeom*.

2. Kim Anguk, *Nobaekdangjip* 虛白堂集, “Nobaekdang seonsaeng munheonseonggonghaengjang” 虛白堂先生文戴成公行狀.

are distinguished between his writings such as the *Akhakgwebeom*, the “Hyeongeumhapjabo,” and the “Jangakwonjemyeonggi” as the supervisor of the nation’s music institute and his records and reviews on the music he experienced as a government official and the *geomungo* enthusiast. The aim for this attempt is for the wider understanding of 15th century music culture by learning about the restructuring of ceremonial musical system in the early days of the Joseon dynasty, as well as ways of music appreciation by literati and government officials.

Seong Hyeon’s Life and Musical Records

Life

Seong Hyeon was born outside the center of the capital city in Yakhyeon 藥峴 as the youngest child with two elder brothers between Seong Yeomjo 成念祖 and Soonheung Ahnssi 順興安氏. Seong’s father was a high ranked government officer by himself as a descendent of Seong Seongrin who was the founding member of early Joseon dynasty. Seong’s forefathers held high positions in the government and his brothers were outstanding scholars and calligraphists, which presumably influenced Seong’s scholarly nature.³

Seong’s eldest brother Seong Im 成任 (1421-1484) and his younger brother Seong Gan 成侃 (1427-1456) were outstanding writers, who were well-read and their experiences were also plenty. Seong Im was good at principal literacy, while Seong Gan was more inclined to establish his own individual literary characteristics rather than complying with the trend of his time. Seong Hyeon further was a disciple of Yun Ja-un 尹子雲, Seo Geo-jeong 徐居正 (1420-1488), Yi Seung-so 李承召 (1422-1484), Gang Hee-maeng 姜希孟 (1424-1483), and Kim Suon 金守濶 (1410-1481).

It seems that Seong Hyeon’s interest in music was a gradual and natural process. Seong’s father died when he was 12 years old, and his brother Seong Im, 18 years older, took Seong under his care. At that time, Seong Im was taking care of organizing national music and served as the director of music

administration office Akhakdogam 樂學都監 under King Sejo, who stated that Seong Im was a “music expert”⁴ to the level of Park Yeon under King Sejong. In the *Yongjaechonghwa*, Seong Hyeon recalls his memory of visiting his brother house where he listened to Song Jeonsu’s music, which suggests that court musicians used to visit his brother’s house. Besides his eldest brother, Seong’s teacher Kim Suon⁵ and his second brother Seong Gan⁶ learned and played the *geomungo*, and Seong Hyeon was a friend of the famous contemporary *geomungo* enthusiast Kim Yu 金紐 (1420-unknown). In this musically influenced environment, Seong Hyeon learned to play the *geomungo* from Yi Maji 李尔知, a musician at Jangakwon, together with his friends. During those days, Seong met Yi Maji every day to study with him, sometimes even spending nights together and constantly listening to music together. Seong learned to play the *geomungo* with Heeryang 希亮, Baekin 伯仁, Jaan 子安, Chimjin 琛珍, Iui 而毅, Gichae 耆蔡, and Juji 籌之 among others.⁷

Seong Hyeon passed the basic test to become a Jinsa, and at age 24 (1462) he became a government official passing the civil service exam. He was 28 when he was promoted by passing another exam. He was appointed to an honorable man of academia in the first year of King Yejong’s reign (1468). In 1469, when young Seongjong ascended to the throne, Seong became his advisor. Under King Seongjong’s policy of strengthening royal authority, Seong then assumed positions at many political-related institution such as Yemungwan, Saheonbu, Seungmunwon, Hongmungwan, and Saganwon, spending relatively easy days in office. When Seong turned 37 (1475, the 6th year of the King Yejong’s reign), he was appointed to supervise Jangakwon credited “as the music expert.” The appointment came at a time when the Joseon government was concerned with

4. *Sejo sillok*, vol. 25, 23rd day (*sinyu*) of the seven month, the 7th year of King Sejo’s reign.

5. Kim Suon, *Geumbeongi* 琴軒記, vol. 13, “Sokdongmunseon.” The translation of the original text is as follows: “I was not good at arts, but I enjoyed performing the *geomungo*.”

6. *Heobaekdangmunjip*, vol. 13, “Jinilseonsaengjeon.” The translation of the original text is as follows: “[My] instructor excelled in all sorts of miscellaneous arts such as cosmology, geology, medicine, and musical poetry. He had deep knowledge of those fields, such that even professionals were no better than him. According to him, he knew about many miscellaneous arts, but music. However, he was able to create his own musical work by understanding *yulryo* 律呂, only after several months of learning the *geomungo*.”

7. Among these, Baekin (Bak Hyoweon) 朴孝元, Iui (Im Sahong, 1445-1506) 任士洪, and Gichae (Chae Su, 1449-1515) were appointed as supervisor at Jangakwon in 1475 (the 6th year of the King Seongjong’s reign). Seong Hyeon’s friendship with Gichae lasted throughout his lifetime.

3. For further details of Seong Hyeon’s biography, see Hong 1992; Hwang 2017.

the possible loss and discontinuation of music that had thrived under King Sejong and King Sejo. In order to support music culture, government officials with profound knowledge of music were searched for, and the original roles and responsibilities were adjusted thereafter.

- Appoint manager 典籤 Pak Hyoweon 朴孝元, provincial governor Kim Ji 金漬, royal reference manager 校理 Seong Hyeon, officer 正郎 Chae Su, and the former manager 直長 Im Heung 任興 to a Seungmunwon position, as well as at Jangakwon. Let them study music every month and practice daily upon beginning the day in office.
- The director 提調 shall lecture on music books 樂書 and scores 樂譜 during days of practice 習樂 before reporting for their duties 能否 each season. At the beginning of each season 歲抄, the director also shall have to observe persons of diligence and laziness 勤慢 in order to take proper action 肄業. Diligent ones shall be promoted 陞敘, while lazy individuals shall be demoted.
- Two examiners 二員 in rotation 輪次 shall preside over 隨參 the audition 取才 of a musician 工人.
- As of today, the Ministry of Interior 吏曹 should report and recommend the person with the musical knowledge so that he shall be appointed to another extra position 兼官.⁸

Appointed as a multi-position officer (Gyeongwan 兼官) Seong Hyeon's role was to oversee the regular monthly practice of musicians, as well as their routine tests at Jangakwon. We can assume that he resumed this duty unless when he was appointed in a remote role. Kim Anguk's "Haengjang" mentions that Seong worked at Jangakwon for the lengthy period of 20 years, demonstrating that Seong spent the majority of his adult life working at the front of national music education and appreciation.

While working at Jangakwon, Seong created some poems "Muakwon gwanak sasū" (Four Sentences Written while Listening to the Music Sitting in Jangakwon 坐樂院觀樂 四首), "Ginyeoreonsingi" (A Newly Picked Female Entertainer 揀新妓), and "Doiyangreonggaemyosu miwiakgwansiwiji" (Doryeong and Iryeong are both Outstanding Performers, but were not

Selected as Official Musicians, which is why I Console them with a Poem 都李兩伶皆妙手未爲樂官詩以慰之).⁹ This poem was composed on his official duties at Jangakwon, where he oversaw the practice of musicians and dancers, appointed new musicians, and was responsible for their promotions. At age 39 (8th year of King Seongjong's reign), Seong was recommended as a person capable of musical theory.

Siganggwon Choe Sukjeong 崔淑 suggested as follows:

Only Jeong Inji 鄭麟趾 understands the theory in China's music book *Lülüxinshu* 律呂新書. If he passes away, no one will be able to study the book. It seems that finding a young intelligent official is necessary so he can study the book from Jeong.¹⁰

Seong was then deemed as a "person who can be selected." Seong's study of *Lülüxinshu* is thought to have become the basis to Volume 1 in Seong's *Akhakgwebeom*, describing the basics of musical theory.

When Seong turned 42 (1480, the 11th year of King Seongjong's reign), the Jangakwon building had completed. The institute then requested Seong to write the "Jangakwonjemyeongi," which describes the meaning, history, and current situation of the national music institute. Seong then took local posts in Gangwon and Pyeongan provinces, where he served as governor between the age of 45 and 50. When he turned 51 (1489, the 20th year of King Seongjong's reign), he returned to the capital assuming the manager position at Seonggyungwan institute and working as the minister of National Rite 禮曹判書 and the director of Civil Affairs. In 1490 (the 21st year of King Seongjong's reign), he participated in correcting the lyrics of *Ssanghwagok* 雙花曲, *Isanggok* 履霜曲, and *Bukjeonga* 北殿歌, together with Im Wonjun 任元濬, Yu Jagwang 柳子光, and Eo Segyeom 魚世謙 under King Seongjong's command.¹¹ In July 1493 (the 24th year of King Seongjong's reign), Seong, who was then 55 years old, was sent to Gyeongsang province to take the position of provincial governor. The following statement of Yu Jagwang,

9. *Heobaekdangjipseupyu* 虛白堂集拾遺, vol. 1, "Doiyangreonggaemyosu miwiakgwansiwiji" 都李兩伶皆妙手未爲樂官詩以慰之.

10. *Seongjo sillok*, vol. 9, the 12th day (*eulsa*) of the 12th month, the 8th year of Seongjong's reign.

11. *Seongjo sillok*, vol. 24, the 21st day (*imsin*) of the 5th month, the 21st year of Seongjong's reign.

8. *Seongjo sillok*, vol. 60, the 26th day (*imin*) of the 10th month, the 6th year of Seongjong's reign.

who was the director at Jangakwon states why Seong should not be sent to Gyeongsang province.

The director (Jejo 提調) in this institute must be able to select a masterly musician through an audition, which is why the royal court has appointed a person who is knowledgeable in music. Seong Hyeon was appointed to the role of Jejo due to his proficiency in music. With his appointment as magistrate in Gyeongsang province, what happens if the next Jejo is not as knowledgeable and cannot tell a good from a bad musician? A magistrate position in Gyeongsang province can be filled by another qualified person, however, this institute needs Seong as the Jejo of Jangakwon.¹²

Yu's petition resulted in the cancellation of Seong's appointment to Gyeongsang province, and Seong became the minister of National Rite while he was appointed at Chunchugwansa at the same time. Yu's petition that "a magistrate position in Gyeongsang province can be filled by another qualified person, however, this institute needs Seong as the Jejo of Jangakwon" can be interpreted that Seong's role and contribution was seen beyond the supervision and appointment of court musicians, but also to the compilation of musical documents. This theory is probable because the historically significant *Akhakgwebeom* was published in August that year. The *Hyeongeumhapjabo* is presumed to have been published at almost the same time. The preface of the latter states that "the study of notational code and system was carried out together with music master Pak Gon 朴崑 and Kim Bokgeun 金福根," who participated in the publication of the *Akhakgwebeom*. We can assume that the *Hyeongeumhapjabo* was published just before, if not simultaneously as the *Akhakgwebeom*, because the system appears in the *geomungo* section of the *Hyeongeumhapjabo*. Seong was further responsible to examine if the instruments kept in the Royal Treasure Storage. His responsibility as the director of Jangakwon was extended to the repair and restoration of instruments with the consent of Storage.¹³ Such repairs can be presumed to have been standard practice for the instruments listed in the *Akhakgwebeom*.

Seong led a peaceful life with many posts in central and local government positions until he died at age 66. Seong published a collection of essays, *Yongjaechonghwa*, when he was 61 (1499, the 6th year of King Yeonsan's reign). The book contains bibliographical records of his experiences including several stories on music, including reviews on the best performers of his lifetime and a list of their musical majors and talents. It also deals with court music and dance, such as the newly introduced "Associating Dance of Crane, Lotus Flower, and Cheoyong" 鶴蓮花臺處容舞合設. The collection also includes conversations between Seong and the *geomungo* performer Im Hong, who he met during his days at Jangakwon. He also evaluates the music and dance at banquets of officials and literati. Reflecting on his life, Seong states that his days and nights were surrounded by music throughout his life.

As the minister of National Rite, I was also the director of Jangakwon. There rarely was a day during which I didn't listen to music, be it a banquet held for Japanese or Chinese visitors, or musicians auditioning for a position at the institute. Even when visiting Taepyeongwan (the Hotel for Diplomatic Delegations 太平館), which was surrounded by the homes of female entertainers and musicians, or on my commute to the office passing the South Gate, where famous singers on duty 歌婢 would perform, I was exposed to music every day in any aspect. My neighbors taught music to their servants till late into the night, so that I would enjoy listening to music when I lay down for the night. Poor scholars, while studying diligently, often fail to gain fame and died nameless. Compared to them, I was able to live in peace, surrounded by music day and night, owing to passing a government exam at a young age and having been promoted to the minister.¹⁴

This quote may reflect Seong's life in a brief manner, but is nonetheless important, as it describes the musical environment of 15th century capital city Hanyang, the daily lives of literati and government officials, and their music appreciation.

12. *Seongjo sillok*, vol. 28, the 3rd day (*eulchuk*) of the 8th month, the 24th year of Seongjong's reign.

13. *Seongjo sillok*, vol. 283, the 9th day (*gyeongo*) of the 10th month, the 24th year of Seongjong's reign.

14. *Yongjaechonghwa*, vol. 2.

Writings

As an exemplary musical enthusiast and expert, Seong has occasionally inserted his observations and reviews of musical performances within the significant works that he left behind.¹⁵ His poems, prefaces, and essays in the *Heobaekdangjip* and the *Yongjaechonghwa*¹⁶ can be classified under following aspects. First are the records that shed light on the history, concept, and state of royal court music. These include the “Akhakgwebeomseo” that was composed while he published the *Akhakgwebeom*; the “Jangakwonjemyeonggi” which was written by the request of Jangakwon; and the *Hyeongeumhapjaboseo* which was written after the publication of the *Hyeongeumhapjabo*. Through the *Akhakgwebeom* and the *Hyeongeumhapjabo*, Seong realistically describes the difficulties to document the intangible nature of music, as it is in a temporary state, even when possessing profound knowledge on the theory.

In general, [a person’s] skillset varies and musical knowledge can be difficult and easy at the same time. A good performer can be slow in reading scores, and a musician with good knowledge on musical scores does not necessarily know the underlying theory. While it is easy to find a musician who excels at one thing, it is difficult to find one, who possesses a balance and knowledge of music in its entirety, which is regrettable. The difficulty with music is that the pleasant sound quickly disappears and its existence seems vanished. It is similar to a shadow, which appears when some form exists, but without it, it disappears.¹⁷

How can one describe music easily? Music comes from the air and vanishes into it. It is neither possible to paint nor describe music in words. Even if a performer becomes famous, his music will disappear with his death. How can future generations master that skill.¹⁸

Seong Hyeon, whose duty was “how to document music,” seemed to have had the profound realization that musical documents thus far were limited and superficial only. He shied away from discussing the “surface” only without proper understanding of music and musical theory itself. While looking for a proper way of documenting music, he reached the following conclusion.

If one writes musical scores, some can learn the rhythm of the music, if one draws an illustration, some can manufacture the instrument in its shape, if one documents musical theory exists, some can learn how to make music...¹⁹

When the sketch is made and the tools are kept, the craft men can learn how to make the product. The archer can learn how to shoot well when he sees a target board in advance. This is the ground of publishing the *Hapjabo*...²⁰

Seong’s idea of a proper way of documenting music was to focus on “what is possible.” His achievements are of particular importance. As he realized the “limitations of music documentation,” Seong explored a variety of methods to do so properly. He was striving to make precise records of the early days of court music from the beginning of the Joseon dynasty to its practice 時用 under Seongjong’s rule.

Secondly, this paper will take a look at Seong’s records of performances in the form of reviews that he had seen or heard while in office. Music was prevalent in the lives of government officials in the Joseon dynasty. Listening to and observing musical performances began with the preparations for the examinations to become a government official through numerous banquets and ceremonial traditions. After passing the exam, the level of exposure to music would depend on their respective rank, but opportunities were plenty: whether at seasonal court ceremonies and periodical events (*manggwolrye* 望闕禮, *manggunrye* 望宮禮, *yeongjochik* 迎詔勅, and *baepyo* 拜表) for festive occasions (*tanil*, *jeongjo*, *dongji*, and so on) and royal festivities

15. His works include *Heobaekdangjip* (vol. 15), *Heobaekdangbojip* (vol. 5), *Heobaekdangmunjip* (vol. 15), *Pungaron* 風雅論 (vol. 3), *Buhyujadamron* 浮休子談論 (vol. 6), *Sangyubiram* 桑楡備覽 (vol. 40), *Pungogwebeom* 風騷軌範 (vol. 9), and *Akhakgwebeom* (vol. 9).

16. These two sources are available at DB of the Institute for the Translation of Korean Classics (<http://db.itkc.or.kr>).

17. *Heobaekdangjip*, vol. 7, “Akhakgwebeomseo.”

18. *Heobaekdangjip*, vol. 7, “Hyeongeumhapjaboseo.”

19. *Heobaekdangjip*, vol. 7, “Akhakgwebeomseo.”

20. *Heobaekdangjip*, vol. 7, “Hyeongeumhapjaboseo.”

including music and dance performances for a king's outing outside of the palace (*daega* 大駕 and *beopga* 法駕), or welcoming and bidding farewell to foreign envoys. Furthermore, official musical performances were held for government officials, who left for regional posts, either before they left or after they were welcomed at their new station. As mentioned already, Seong held many positions in Hanyang, served as magistrate to Gangwon and Pyeongan, and made four trips to China after his thirties during which he had multiple opportunities to observe and listen to musical performances. He recounted such experiences in many poems in direct and indirect form, addressing anything from court ceremonial music over New Year's celebrations and court music traditions, duties at Jangakwon, banquets after moving to Pyeongyang, official banquets in regional offices, and music and dance to welcome or bid farewell to other officials. These records are significant in the sense that they give insight into musical demand in the public realm as well as the ways of appreciation.

Thirdly, there are Seong's records of contemporary music trends and his personal in music appreciation. Thanks to his eldest brother Seong Im, who worked at the Office of Music Studies (Akhakdogam), Seong got acquainted with performers at Jangakwon. Holding the position of Gyeongwan at Jangakwon, he was further able to meet the famous contemporary musicians. As such, he would introduce the music world of his time by focusing on musicians and reviewing their respective fields and skills. Through his book *Yongjaechonghwa*, we can learn about the most famous performers by instrument, the musical preference, and aesthetical standard of music enthusiasts of his time. Apart from that, Seong composed several poems on his love for the *geomungo*. The subject matter ranges from poems about performing the *geomungo* alone in order to follow the Confucian ideal of musician theory (*geumnon*) to achieve the ideally neutral harmony or the Middle Way (*junghwajigi* 中和之氣) to the scenes of *geomungo* performances by the famed musicians. These poems provide a glimpse into the perception and affection towards the *geomungo* by 15th century literati and government officials. Instead of reviewing Seong's personal music criticism, this paper will focus on 15th century music trends by analyzing the development of ceremonial court music, operations of a national music institute, and aspects of music appreciation by literati and government officials.

Seong Hyeon's Musical Documents and 15th century Trends

Development of National Ceremonial Music Reflected in the Akhakgwebeom

The *Akhakgwebeom* was published and equipped with a preface by Seong. The book provides general information about the organization of national ceremonial music during the Joseon dynasty. The book was compiled and written by Yu Jagwang, director of Jangakwon, Seong Hyeon, minister of National Rite, Sin Malpyeong 申末平, vice director of Jangakwon, Pak Gon, music director, and Kim Bokgeun by the order of King Seongjong in order to amend and supplement protocols and music scores by Jangakwon. The book contains detailed and comprehensive compilation of the concept and nature of music, the relationship between peaceful reign and music, the history of Chinese ceremonial music passing down to Joseon, the development of national music organization in Joseon, arrangement and performance of musicians and dancers, and descriptions for building instruments and other equipment for performances.

Table 1. Structure and Content of the *Akhakgwebeom* in 9 Chapters

Classification	Volume No.	Content	
<i>Akhak</i>	Vol. 1	Music Theory	樂論
<i>Gywebeom</i>	Vol. 2	Principles of Orchestra Use	陳設
	Vol. 3	<i>Dangak</i> 唐樂 Dance of the Goryeo Dynasty	呈才
	Vol. 4	<i>Hyangak</i> 鄉樂 Dance of the Goryeo Period	
	Vol. 5	<i>Dangak</i> Dance and <i>Hyangak</i> Dance of the Joseon Period	
	Vol. 6	Confucian Ritual Music (<i>Aakki</i> 雅樂器)	
	Vol. 7	Instruments for Court Music (<i>Dangakki</i> 唐樂器 and <i>Hyangakki</i> 鄉樂器)	
	Vol. 8	Performance Props	儀物
	Vol. 9	Costume	冠服

Foundation of music theory

Volume 1 provides information about music theory that was established in the 15th century. The contents were results from studying and applying classic tradition and musical theory of Chinese music under King Sejong. As a

Confucian nation, Joseon, accepted the musical theory written in the Chinese music theory book *Yueji* (*Record of Music* 樂記). The intention to influence traditions positively via music and lead an ideal society is revealed in the introductory part of Seong's "Akhakgwebeomseo."

Music comes from the heavens and stays in the human world, commencing in a vacant state. It is created by nature. Music is felt deeply in the human mind, circulating one's blood and sparking joy. As one has different feelings, sound is not the same either. What is felt with a joyous mind spreads happily, what is felt with an angry mind feels coarse and wild, what is felt with a sad mind makes one small and low, and what is felt with a happy mind makes one generous and slow. A king's rule changes how these different and incongruous sounds come together in an amalgamation. With differences in righteous and unjust rule, traditional rites will improve or worsen. The nature of music is thus closely related to politics and education of the public.²¹

The musical ideology *chisaegiuem* 治世之音 states that the king needs to inspect the influence of music over humans and that to create good customs is the basis for Joseon national ceremonial music. The belief that social ideology can be applied to practical music has been established in the theoretical guide on music, too.

Meanwhile Park Yeon, who participated in the reformation of court music under King Sejong, noticed that early Joseon music was in disarray with the Chinese book *Zhouli* 周禮 and confusing. He proposed to study original texts to resolve the issue of instrument usage. Accordingly, various books related to ceremonial ritual such as the *Zhouli*, the *Tongdian* 通典, and the *Zhouli tu* 周禮圖, historical records such as the *Suishu* 隋書 and the *Songshi* 宋史, and encyclopedia such as the *Yuhai* 玉海, the *Shiming* 釋名, the *Wenxiantongkao* 文獻通考, and the *Fengsu tongyi* 風俗通義 were reexamined. Other references included scriptures such as the *Yueji* 樂記 and the *Yueshu* 樂書 written by Chen Yang 陳暘 during the Song dynasty in China, musical documents such as the *Lülixinshu* by Cai Yuanding 蔡元定 and the *Dasheng Yueshu* 大晟樂書, and various materials like the *Yili jing zhuan tongjie* 儀禮經傳通解 and the *Dachengyuepu* 大成樂譜. King Sejong notably participated in the analytical reading of *Lülixinshu* in order to

establish the musical theory of Joseon, and by doing so he completed the writing of a new score of Confucian ritual music, *Sinjeaakbo* 新制雅樂譜 (Song 2000b).

While working on the publication of the *Akhakgwebeom*, Seong Hyeon re-arranged Confucian ritual music (*aak* 雅樂) theory that had been established during King Sejong by distinguishing the principles of sound applied separately to upper terrace orchestra (*deungga* 登歌) and lower terrace orchestra (*heonga* 軒架). He referred to the method to measure 12 notes (*sambunsonikbeop* 三分損益法), the principle of 60 mode scales by combining 12 notes and 5 tones, as well as the pitch range of 16 tones of court music. Among many theories under King Sejong's rule, Seong was specifically selective of only adopting those theories that were necessary for the practical purpose of performing court music.

The theory section in Volume 1 and instrument section in Volume 6 of the *Akhakgwebeom* not only deal with *aak*, but also include musical tone theory of Tang-derived *dangak* and indigenous *hyangak*. This inclusion can be interpreted as *hyangak's* larger contribution to court ceremonial music, when King Sejong's new music established its foundation.

Foundations of performance style

Volume 2 in the *Akhakgwebeom* introduces performance styles according to the formalized style by instrument and then lists these by occasion, including performances at official morning court assembly, official banquets, military practice, and further court ceremonies that were established during the course of the 15th century. Court ceremonial music is classified into three categories. First is Confucian ritualistic music 祭禮雅樂 used for the rites for deceased or holy spirits, such as *sajik* 社稷, *pungunnoeu* 風雲雷雨, *sancheonseonghwang* 山川城隍, *seonnonng* 先農, *seonjam* 先蠶, *usa* 雩祀, and *munseonwang* 文宣王. Second is folk ceremonial music 祭禮俗樂 such as royal ancestral shrine (*jongmyo* 宗廟) and Yeonneongjeon 永寧殿 shrine performances to offer ceremonies for the late kings and eminent government officials. Third are *dangak* and *hyangak*, performed at offering ceremonies held at other shrines such as Munsojeon 文昭殿, Yeoneunjeon 延恩殿, and Sogyeonjeon 昭敬殿.²² Court ceremonial

21. "Akhakgwebeomseo." Also see Lee 2000.

22. In Wonmyo musical rituals performed at Munsojeon followed the style of music played during the lifetime of the royal ancestors worshipped.

music was well established, owing to the effort during King Sejong's time to establish proper court music. However, during the reign of King Sejo, newly composed music was also classified as court music, constituting a change of performance style and the concept of ceremonial folk music. The real application of the extensive theoretical work under King Sejong resulting in 144 original works can be seen in the 15 pieces that were included in the *Akhakgwebeom*.

The various examples of instrument arrangements in Volume 2 of the *Akhakgwebeom* provide insight into 15th century national ceremonial music styles. We can observe four types of instrumental performance groups for different ceremonies such as *johoe* (official morning court gathering 朝會), *jocham* (official morning attendance 朝參), and others. Musical ensembles performed in their allocated positions as *jeonbugochwi* (preceding the king's barrow 前部鼓吹), *jeonhugochwi* (performing in the palace's backyard 前後鼓吹), and *hubugochwi* (following the king's barrow 後部鼓吹). Ensembles responsible for performances in the front courtyard's reserved ceremonial space (*haengrye*) were positioned as courtyard orchestras called *jeonjeongheonga* 殿庭軒架 and *jeonjeonggochwi* 殿庭鼓吹. Ceremonies in the front courtyard (*jeonjeong*) were performed by Tang-derived *dangakki* and indigenous *hangakki* instruments. However, for *jeonjeongheonga* performances, *aakgi* was included as part of the king's music troupe. *Jeonjeongheonga* was regarded as a superior ensemble than *jeonjeonggochwi*, constituted of *dangakki* and *hyangakki* instruments. Ensemble members could vary in order to symbolize the ceremony host's social status (Song 2012, 5-31).

Ceremonial banquet music can be categorized into 25 styles, according to occasion, purpose, and attendants. The majority of court banquets constituted ceremonies and celebrations held for the king (*jeonjeongyeyeon* 正殿禮宴), for the king's grandmother and queen (*jinpungjeong* 進豐呈), and for senior family members and foreign convoys (*jinyeon* 進宴). Other types included performances when the king attended archery performances by his senior family members and military officials, or attended traditional rites such as *cheoyonghui* 處容戲, *narye* 儼禮, *gangmu* 講武, and *daesarye* 大射禮. Banquets were also held for ritualized labour tasks to show the subjects their importance: *chingyeongjeokjeon* 親耕籍田 for agriculture and *chinjamrye* 親蠶禮 for sericulture, by the king and the queen respectively. Banquets were also held in respect of former literati (*giroyeon* 耆老宴) and elders of society (*yangroyeon* 養老宴). Music bestowed for retainers (*saak* 賜樂) was considered court ceremonial music as well.

Ceremonial banquet music was performed by a single ensemble of *dangakki* and *hyangakki* instruments along with female entertainers or child dancers who were in charge of song and dance. The scale of a performance was determined by the level of importance of reverence, which was reflected in the number of performers, composition, and costumes. 15th century banquet music applied changes to Goryeo-derived songs with improper content or language, sometimes even excluding such songs from performances or including new compositions for music and dance which describe events since the foundation of Joseon.²³ Individual pieces such as "Botaepyeong" 保太平, "Jeongdaeop" 定大業, "Bongnaeui" 鳳來儀, and "Hak yeonhwadae cheoyongmuapseol" 鶴蓮花臺處容舞合設 were composed and created during this period. Among these, "Botaepyeong," "Jeongdaeop," and "Bongnaeui" are dance and music that combined the elements of *dangak* and *aak* in *hyangak*. "Hak yeonhwadae cheoyongmuapseol" is a type of ritual dance combining several court festive dances of both indigenous and Chinese origin in order to chase away evil spirits and welcome new festivities (*byeoksajingyeong* 僻邪進慶), but it also included not only elements of Shamanism but also unique "blends" of Buddhist ritual elements such as *mitachan* (praise to Amitabha 彌陀讚), *bonsachan* (praise to Shakayamui 本師讚), and *gwaneumchan* (praise to Avalokitesvara 觀音讚). While "Hak yeonhwadae cheoyongmuapseol" was performed for special occasions to chase away evil spirits (*narye*) only, it is highly interesting that they were newly composed with such Buddhist elements under King Sejo and established as court dance performances under King Seonjong, eventually being included in the *Akhakgwebeom*.

The *Akhakgwebeom* systematically describes rituals, court ceremonies, instruments, and props necessary for a wide range of ceremonial banquets, as well as costumes worn by performers. The information collected and accumulated by Jangakwon since King Sejong seems to have laid the foundation for this work. The *Sejong Chronicles* (*Sejong sillok*) states that music administration officials referred to and compared original texts whenever they made written and pictorial records of instruments and props or the production of costumes in order to report to the king and get his consent. The records of court music instruments with 46 accompanying props, 13

23. The examples are "Monggeumcheok" 夢金尺, "Suborok" 受寶錄, "Geuncheonjeong" 勤天庭, "Hawangeun" 賀皇恩, "Haseongmyeong" 賀聖明, and "Seongtaek" 聖澤.

dangakki and 7 *hyangakki* instruments, 49 equipments, and 63 costumes became the foundation for the maintenance and passing down of national ceremonial music. For the first time in history, documentation was compiled of the detailed terms for *hyangak* instruments, materials, production, size, tone, tuning methods, and playing techniques including supporting illustrations. The systematic definition of *hyangakki* instruments has contributed immensely to the understanding of 15th century ceremonial music.

The Conditions of National Music Organization in the “Jangakwonjemyeonggi”

The “Jangakwonjemyeonggi” was written by Seong Hyeon by request of Jangakwon during the December in the 11th year of King Seongjong’s reign (1480), in order to commemorate the completion of its new building. Seong describes the institute’s change over time after he clearly defines the essence and nature of music based on Confucian musical theory, which compares the influence of music over mankind with the inseparable relationship of king and country. He further defines the necessity of music to a nation and the effect of musical performance in ritual and ceremony.

One must know music. Without music, sadness and distress cannot be resolved. The nation shall not be without music, even for a single day. Communication between people cannot exist without music, and harmony cannot be achieved. [Our] late king established policies on music and created an organization to administer all musical affairs. Based on mankind’s universal nature, a good mind will move and inspire while improper thoughts will be punished.

Thus, one can express their mind through humming and singing or using different instruments from chimes (*jong*), drums (*buk*), and pipes (*piri*). Sounds, tunes, and melodies will placate one’s mind while fast or slow dance moves reflect one’s emotions. Performances in court will manage hierarchy in an orderly manner, while performances at a grave will move a spirit. Performances in a normal household or village will lead to merry emotions and a virtuous mind. Therefore, music influences people to thrive for a more civilized world and inevitably social custom changes for the better.²⁴

The prologue of the “Jangakwonjemyeonggi” summarizes Joseon ritual and ceremonial music theory. It stresses the righteousness of the nation music institute’s origin and management, which gives insight into Seong’s understanding of the course of national music.

Separate independent institutes for *aak*, *dangank*, and *hyangak* existed under King Sejong’s rule. These were Aakseo 雅樂署, Jeonakseo 典樂署, and Gwanseupdogam 慣習都監 respectively. Akhak 樂學 was in charge of theoretical or academic research on music. Together they handled all kinds of court rituals and ceremonies, were responsible for the training of performers, and managed the placement of performers by demand. These institutes except for Akhakdogam were combined in Jangakseo 掌樂署 during the 3rd year of King Sejo’s reign (1457). In the 12th year of King Sejo’s rule (1466), Akhagdogam was merged into Jangakseo as well. Under King Sejong, Jangakseo was renamed to Jangakwon, an institute with more than a thousand members. It goes without saying that the institute’s rank was changed, too.²⁵

In this book, Seong describes the evolution of the national music institute, while pointing out problems, the shortage of experts to manage and direct the various music affairs, lack of space for the many performers, and so on. These issues were resolved under King Seongjong. Seong puts particular emphasis on the completion of the new Jangakwon building. Prior to the construction, musicians had to rehearse in Buddhist temples, as described in Kang Seokdeok’s 姜碩德 (1395-1459) writing “Songhyeonmuonamgwiseo” (Text to See Monk Muho Off on his Return to the South 送玄無悟南歸序):

When I was young, I studied at Jicheonsa temple. Located close to the capital, it was famous with more than 500 monks. During those days, the institute for female entertainers had no building and had been practicing at the temple for a longer period of time. Twice a month, on the first day of the month and full moon, large gatherings were held for practice and it was in those times, when silk fabrics dazzled my eyes and fragrant incense was in the air. As soon as the sound of music was audible, monks would gather and admire and point to the maidens. “That girl in that row is most pretty. How happy one must be to beget such a girl. Why do we have to study Buddhism under such hardship.” Long after the maidens’ departure, the

24. *Heobaekdangjip*, vol.3, “Jangakwonjemyeonggi.”

25. Song Bangsong (1973) expounds such changes: “During the reign of King Seongjong, there were 399 members of *jabangaksaeng* 左坊樂生 and 572 members of *ubangakgong* 右坊樂工.”

monks would still feel empty and sad as if they had lost something. Some gave large sums to the musicians to hope for their influence...²⁶

The big temple (*daesa* 大寺) in Seong's "Jangakwonjemyeonggi," which was mentioned as the venue for performance practices of Jangakwon was Jicheonsa temple.²⁷ Kang's record shows that two regular practices were held each month at the temple. When the new construction of Jangakwon was completed, relieving such difficult conditions, Seong described the scale and structure of the building precisely in the "Jangakwonjemyeonggi."

Jangakwon was moved several feet to the East side of Taesang 太常. A few civilian houses had to be demolished for sufficient space of the main office. Next, the hierarchy of high ranked officer and low ranked officer was defined. Teachers and pupils of court and secular music, as well as professional entertainers and female entertainers all were provided living space. Newly built storage space for instruments was ample and the new spacious courtyard across East to West was used to convene all officials for practice and assembly during New Year and winter solstice ceremonies...

He further mentioned the newly built Jangakwon in the *Yongjaechonghwa*:

The new Jangakwon building was the best of all government buildings. Government officials used it to practice rituals and the appointment of new scholars was done there as well.²⁸

Different from the royal chronicles that only listed systematic or organizational changes of the nation, the "Jangakwonjemyeonggi" is meaningful because it is the only record of a comprehensive overview of the purpose and evolution of the national music institute, its management, and space issues. Lastly, Seong evaluates highly the improvements to the national music institute, which had experienced numerous organizational changes since the nation's foundation, as an important factor to the "development of ritual and music (*yeak*)."

26. Kang Seokdeok, *Dongmunseon*, vol. 94, "Songhyeonmuonamgwiso" 送玄無悟南歸序.

27. The location of Jicheonsa temple is unknown, although it was thought to have situated outside the West Gate of Hanyang. Some believe that it was in the Sogongdong area, close to the location of the current Plaza Hotel, Seoul.

28. *Yongjaechonghwa*, vol. 5.

Aspects of Music Notations and Scores in the Hyeongeumhapjaboseo

The "Hapjaboseo" written by Seong is the preface of now lost *geomungo* score *Hyeongeumhapjabo*. The "Hapjaboseo" was written before the *Geumhapjabo* 琴合字譜 (1572), which is the oldest *geomungo* score. The "Hapjaboseo" is an invaluable record for insight into the Joseon *geomungo* notation. We can infer that the score was not composed for personal, but for official purpose through Seong's words in the preface: "I, as the head of all musicians (*akwon* 樂院)..."

Music notation went through revolutionary changes in the 15th century. Though we cannot exactly determine the detailed notation system and total number of musical scores, Goryeo seems to have implemented two types of notation systems. *Yukbo* 肉譜 notation mimics the sound of an instrument through letters, while the other is a Chinese notation system, implemented with the introduction of the *Dasheng yayue* 大晟雅樂. While studying *aak* during King Sejong's rule, China's notation system implemented in the *Yili jing zhuan tongjie* and the *Dasheng yuepu* was viewed under a new light. In 1430, When the *Sinjeaakbo* was published in 1430 (12th year of Sejong's rule), two notation systems were used: one is *yuljabo* 律字譜, using letters to represent twelve notes (*yulmyeong* 律名), and the other is *gongcheokbo* 工尺譜, which was developed to notate *dangak* (Tang-derived music).

King Sejong wanted to develop a new notation system in order to notate new compositions that were based on *hyangak* (native Korean music). Chinese music mainly used a notation system for one syllable per note with a constant regularity so that scores would only note differences in pitch. However, *hyangak* was usually sung with several notes per syllable, including differences in tempo, which Chinese notation could not capture. King Sejong, therefore, developed a new notation system which would incorporate tempo and the length of each note. He implemented the use of squares (*jeonggan* 井間) to capture height as well as length of a note. This was a completely revolutionary way of noting the "continuation of tone." Using this system, King Sejong notated and published his own compositions *sinak* 新樂 and *sokak* 俗樂. He arranged 32 *jeonggan* in one line, distinguishing the different rows to notate both tone and words of the melody, as well as rhythmic signs for percussion instruments such as *jangu* and *bak*. This score is named the "Sejong sillok akbo," included in the royal chronicles *Sejong sillok* (Lee 1972).

Sejong's notation system underwent yet another evolution under King Sejo. The 32 *jeonggan* was shortened to 16 *jeonggan*. Sejo further grouped the squares into two and three *jeonggan* groups "3-2-3-3-2-3" with the intention to create structure and measures of the music. Within the 6-structure grouping, Sejo replaced the 12 *yulmyeong* with the five-note number system (*oeumyakbo* 五音略譜) "1-2-3-4-5" used in *hyangak*. Sejo further attempted to use different notations for the beginning of each grouping (*daegang* 大綱) in order to show tempo. The notation system that King Sejo developed by adding more descriptive information to Sejong's original *jeonggan* notation is classified as 16 *jeonggan daegangbo* 大綱譜 or *oeumyakbo*. The new system is evaluated as more effective to notate *hyangak* (Lee 1972; Mun 2015), now found in the royal chronicle *Sejo sillok* as the "Sejo sillok akbo" 世祖實錄樂譜. *Oeumyakbo* made it possible to notate lyrics, pitch, tempo and time, and frequency at once, thereby becoming a turning point for the Joseon notation.

Seong devised a new notation system during King Seongjong's reign, which aimed at incorporating performance technique to the notation system instituted by the late kings. The outcome was the creation of *hapjabo* 合字譜, which used letters as supplementary information for string instruments. Seong thought that the performance techniques of China's *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 and *Daesheng yuepu* can be used to learn from as if a carpenter can learn as long as a ruler or metal measure is provided and an archer can learn to shoot if he can span a bow. While Seong's *Hyeonggeumhabjabo* has been lost, we can infer that he used the *daegang* notation to denote pitch, finger movement for *geomungo*, and letters to number its strings because sound comes from the pluck (*hwak* 攪) and rhythm from the grouping (*gang* 綱).²⁹ The notation system found in Seong's *habjabo* did not only serve as a record of the performance techniques of the Jangakwon musicians for future generations, but also served as an introduction for literati to play the *geomungo*.

29. Seong's *Hyeonggeumhabjabo* is lost now, but it is mentioned in the *Geumhapjabo*, the *Hyeonggeumdongmunryugi*, and the *Geumbosinjeunggaryeong*. Through these records, we can infer that some verses (*byeolgok*) such as "Yeominrak," "Boheoja," "Hallimbyeolgok," and "Gamguneun" as well as songs such as "Daeceop" and "Bukjeon" were recorded in the *Hyeonggeumhapjabo* (Song 1997).

Musical Preference and Tendency among the Upper Class Bureaucrats and Literati Reflected in Poetical Writings

Official appreciation

Seong left records that document the types and circumstances of banquets he attended at court and local government posts. His poems are rather abstract, but nonetheless hold information on the musical occasions and spectators' viewpoints. Seong witnessed a myriad of performances and occasions, listing them in his records. He attended banquets for the royal household, such as *harye*³⁰ (greeting ceremony for the king or his grandparents) and *yeonhyang*³¹ (royal banquets), *junggungchaekbonguirye*³² (ceremony for the queen's inauguration), *munmyo jerye*³³ (ceremony at a Confucian shrine), *bumyo*³⁴ (tablet enshrinement of a deceased king or queen at Royal Ancestral Jongmyo shrine), Munsojeon *bongan*³⁵ (tablet enshrinement at Munsojeon), *gangmu* (hunting festivities), and *sayeol* (military training 查閱) at Mohwagwan (designated residence for Chinese envoys). He further attended military ceremonies³⁶ such as *daesarye* (archery ritual by the king), *jeokjeon chingyeong*³⁷ (king's symbolic plowing to encourage agriculture), *munmugwa bangbang* (ceremony to celebrate literary and martial arts), *eunyeongyeon*³⁸ (ceremony hosted by the king to celebrate scholars who passed the government exam) as well as *sasin*

30. The original text is as follows: ㉠ "聖辰賀畢賜宰樞宴于外庭"; ㉡ "賀冬至"; ㉢ "元日會禮宴 戊午" (*Heobaekdangbojip*, vol. 2).

31. The original text is as follows: ㉠ "忠翊府進豐呈于慶會樓下" (*Heobaekdangjipseupyu*, vol. 1); ㉡ "二十七日宗親進宴上御慶會樓受之又賜宴於賓廳宰樞正二品以上及弘文館臺諫等赴宴" (*Heobaekdangjijip*, vol. 6).

32. The original text is as follows: "十一月初八册封中宮" (*Heobaekdangjijip*, vol. 7).

33. The original text is as follows: ㉠ "津宮雜詠 二首 辛亥" (*Heobaekdangbojip*, vol. 1); ㉡ "親祭文宣王大醮儒生作二十韻" (*Heobaekdangbojip*, vol. 1); ㉢ "三月一日親祀文廟行大射禮" (*Heobaekdangbojip*, vol. 5).

34. The original text is as follows: "祔康靖大王神主于太廟" (*Heobaekdangbojip*, vol. 1).

35. The original text is as follows: "改構文昭殿奉移神御于古東宮事畢還安 甲寅" (*Heobaekdangbojip*, vol. 1).

36. The original text is as follows: ㉠ "侍獵注洞" (*Heobaekdangbojip*, vol. 7); ㉡ "慕華館親閱" (*Heobaekdangbojip*, vol. 3); ㉢ "大茲山扈駕觀獵 二十韻" (*Heobaekdangbojip*, vol. 4); ㉣ "泉岷扈駕觀獵 二十韻" (*Heobaekdangbojip*, vol. 4); ㉤ "三月一日親祀文廟行大射禮" (*Heobaekdangbojip*, vol. 5).

37. The original text is as follows: "賀親耕籍田頌" (*Heobaekdangmunjip*, vol. 2).

38. The original text is as follows: ㉠ "拔英試恩榮宴" (*Heobaekdangshijip*, vol. 1); ㉡ "二月七日親祀文宣王御明倫堂出題策士退御幕次聚羽林射獻取文武各三人節目放勝賜第" (*Heobaekdangjijip*, vol. 6); ㉢ "世昌會新同年宴飲" (*Heobaekdangbojip*, vol. 4).

*hwanyeongyeon*³⁹ (welcoming banquet for foreign envoys), entertainment for foreign envoys,⁴⁰ *sesuirye*⁴¹ (ceremony in preparation of national exams), *jeonbyeohyeon*⁴² (farewell party), and official performance at local government,⁴³ including welcome and farewell parties⁴⁴ organized by the local government. Seong's records are informative in that he included a title to each poem along with information on the time, place, and occasion of each performance. He distinguishes the music by creating imagery of the sounds of different instrumentation combining percussions, wind instruments, string instruments, voice, dance, or drawing. Though regretful that his poems only use these more general terms, we can nonetheless distinguish between the differences of ensemble through his differentiation of each occasion. For example, in a poem he composed about the festivities hosted after King Seongjong's Confucian memorial service, he states, "the instruments were arranged from top to bottom"; and "like a military sergeant whose warships align on his command, the musicians perform their movement." Such description shows that the festivities were conducted with abundance but orderly fashion, as the

musicians were positioned on top and below the royal stage, performing and singing according to the recitation of the conductor.⁴⁵ His four poems that he composed while supervising Jangakwon⁴⁶ give precise descriptions of the pieces "Jeongdaecop," "Pyogurak" 拋毬樂, "Monggeumcheok," and "Heonseondo" 獻仙桃 so that we can learn not only their subject matter but also their poetic verse.

Seong's records on the different ceremonies at famous venues in Pyeongyang, which he attended while stationed as the magistrate of Pyeongando province, give particular insight into new year's ceremonies and balls.

Important guests sit on silken cushions
 Female entertainers line up in three rows in the front
 The ladies split up to dance the "Pogurak"
 Jade pipes steadily play the "Manjeonchun"
 華館犀龜鎮錦茵 三行紅粉儼前陳 羅衫競舞拋毬樂 玉管齊吹滿殿春⁴⁷

This poem shows that local governments in Pyeongyang were also holding New Year's rituals and banquets similar to the royal court, and were also performing royal dance and music pieces like the "Pogurak" and the "Manjeonchun."

Seong's records on the string performances he attended while in office are evidence that music and dance performances for rituals and ceremonies by the nation's commission were important to 15th century royal court and public officials.

Geomungo Appreciation

Geomungo appreciation slowly became a norm among 15th century literati and government officials. Together with his friends, Seong Hyeon invited the *geomungo* instructors to practice and study the instrument.⁴⁸ Kim Ilson 金駟孫 (1464-1498) learned to play the *geomungo*⁴⁹ together with his friends Sin

39. The original text is as follows: "慶會樓宴西征將士" (*Heobaekdangsjip*, vol. 6).

40. The original text is as follows: ㉔ "天使鄭同姜玉到義順館" (*Heobaekdangsjip*, vol. 7); ㉕ "仲秋六日幸慕華館饌太監還京" (*Heobaekdangsjip*, vol. 7); ㉖ "到安州送董侍講王給事中兩天使仍次兩使百祥樓韻二首" (*Heobaekdangsjip*, vol. 14).

41. The original text is as follows: ㉗ "觀儺" (*Heobaekdangsjip*, vol. 7); ㉘ "觀火" (*Heobaekdangsjip*, vol. 7); ㉙ "處容 癸卯年作" (*Heobaekdangsjip*, vol. 9); ㉚ "除夕入侍後苑觀火是時大雪" (*Heobaekdangbojip*, vol. 1).

42. The original text is as follows: ㉛ "送進香使刑曹判書李藩仲封赴京" (*Heobaekdangsjip*, vol. 13); ㉜ "進香使李藩仲封回自京師是日義州宣慰使蔡著之亦自京而至" (*Heobaekdangsjip*, vol. 14); ㉝ "送子強兄以謝恩使赴京" (*Heobaekdangsjip*, vol. 14); ㉞ "登安州百祥樓宴慰兩使明日奉別" (*Heobaekdangsjip*, vol. 14); ㉟ "風月樓宴慰都承旨宋公瑛明日又慰伯彥可珍相繼還京" (*Heobaekdangsjip*, vol. 14); ㊱ "遞任上京僚佐送錢江上" (*Heobaekdangsjip*, vol. 14); ㊲ "送忠清申節度使 四首" (*Heobaekdangbojip*, vol. 5); ㊳ "留別亞使子珍" (*Heobaekdangjipseubyu*, vol. 1).

43. The original text is as follows: ㊴ "大平館夜飲" (*Heobaekdangsjip*, vol. 5); ㊵ "東萊縣令設饌宴" (*Heobaekdangsjip*, vol. 5); ㊶ "監司送至大同江" (*Heobaekdangsjip*, vol. 14).

44. The original text is as follows: ㊷ "十五日千秋使回自京師余備歌吹往邀浮碧樓乘月順流而下" (*Heobaekdangsjip*, vol. 14); ㊸ "邀千秋使柳希明登浮碧樓翌日又遊南浦戲用前韻" (*Heobaekdangsjip*, vol. 13); ㊹ "登寧邊運籌樓宴慰兵使" (*Heobaekdangsjip*, vol. 13); ㊺ "千秋使柳希明回還迂于浮碧樓" (*Heobaekdangsjip*, vol. 13); ㊻ "與遠接使許公宗卿 琮 宣慰使李公士高 克墩 朴公子啓 權 權公叔強 健 崔公寶臣 應賢 承旨李公 季男 留數日設酌" (*Heobaekdangsjip*, vol. 13); ㊼ "入平壤府" (*Heobaekdangsjip*, vol. 12); ㊽ "元日記事 二首 丁未年公猶在關西作" (*Heobaekdangsjip*, vol. 12); ㊾ "又與希亮伯彥可珍乘舟遊至南浦而還時希亮為安州宣慰使伯彥為義州宣慰使可珍為都司宣慰使也" (*Heobaekdangsjip*, vol. 13); ㊿ "與士高登浮碧樓泛舟順流遊至車門南浦而還 三首" (*Heobaekdangsjip*, vol. 14); ㊽ "與士高登後園松間" (*Heobaekdangsjip*, vol. 14); ㊾ "與士高設酌于風月樓池中小島" (*Heobaekdangsjip*, vol. 14); ㊿ "子強兄來自北京余與監司往遊浮碧樓" (*Heobaekdangsjip*, vol. 14).

45. The original text is as follows: "親祭文宣王大醮儒生作二十韻" (*Heobaekdangbojip*, vol. 1).

46. *Heobaekdangbojip*, vol. 1, "坐樂院觀樂 四首."

47. *Heobaekdangsjip*, vol. 12, "Wonilgisa isu jeonmiyeongongyujaegwanseojak" 元日記事 二首 丁未年公猶在關西作.

48. *Yongjaehonghwa*, vol. 1.

49. Yi Sik's writing also states, "a small banquet boat was provided at Dokseodang for the literati in their

Gaeji 申漑之, Kang Saho 姜士浩, Kim Jaheon 金子獻, Yi Kwaji 李穎之, and Yi Saseong 李師聖⁵⁰ during his period of book-reading leave. Kim Suon, who was also Seong's teacher, asserted, "I had no talent in arts, but I knew how to play the *geomungo*,"⁵¹ thereby displaying his affection for the instrument. Seong's second brother, Seong Gan stated, "I was good at all sorts of studies but music. I only learned to play the *geomungo* a little after studying under Kim Yu."⁵² Above examples illustrate that playing the *geomungo* in literati circles had advanced to "mandatory pastime."

It is true that string music is better than other forms and that within string music, nothing is better than the *geomungo*. It is truly a worthy instrument to enjoy.⁵³

In music, the *geomungo* is the best. If compared to literature, it is a literary giant.⁵⁴

Ancestors devised many instruments in order to control people's nature.⁵⁵

As can be seen above, "*geomungo* appreciation" compared to other instruments was valued highly. Seong Hyeon possessed profound knowledge of the *geomungo* performance, so that he was able to publish the *Hyeonggeumhapjabo*. Whether by himself or with his friends, Seong enjoyed playing the *geomungo* and listening to the famous musicians. His poems can be classified into such that they express his feelings when playing alone, together with his friends, or listening to the virtuosos he invited for a performance.

sagadokseo period so they could learn the *geomungo*. Receiving instruments from Jangakwon was the first order" (*Taekdangseonsaeng byeoljip*, vol. 5).

50. Kim Ilson, *Seoyukhyeonbae* 序六絃背, vol. 18, "Sokdongmunseon."

51. Kim Suon states, "I had no time to study arts, but have enjoyed the *geomungo* in particular for many seasons" (*Geumbeongi*, vol. 13, "Sokdongmunseon").

52. Seong Hyeon states, "The instructor was well versed in astronomy, geography, medicine, divinity, calligraphy, arithmetics, translation, phonology, and so on, giving minute insight into each respective field. Even those in each respective profession could not master the instructor. I said 'I know everything about literature and other studies, but don't know much about music.' At last I learned how to hold and play the *geomungo* and within a few months was able to emit a sound that helped me find enlightenment in *yulryo*" (*Heobaekdangmunjip*, vol.13, "Jinilseonsaengjeon").

53. Kim Suon, *Geumbeongi*, vol.13, "Sokdongmunseon."

54. *Yongjaechonghwa*, vol.1.

55. Kim Ilson, *Seoyukhyeonbae*, vol.18, "Sokdongmunseon."

Sitting alone in a quiet home, a myriad of thoughts cross my mind...
Only the *geomungo* is here to understand me,
Selecting the strings to play a song or two⁵⁶

Playing the *geomungo* on the night of August 14, when the moon was
shining as bright as daylight as I sat wrapped in a blanket⁵⁷

I wonder how tall the peach trees of my home are
Almost forming a wood, the garden seems wrapped under a red blanket
To rain down red blossoms on a mellow spring day
I lean on the trees daily to play the *geomungo*⁵⁸

However hard I work for the nation, slander is all that comes back
Family reputation is ruined and I grieve unseen
Absent-mindedly I pluck the strings of my dusty *geomungo*
All my grief arises moving me to tears⁵⁹

I play the *geomungo* to appease my mind
After reading a history book to break solitude⁶⁰

Finding my true nature with the *geomungo* and a book
I sometimes wander to the neighboring village with a walking stick⁶¹

These poems show that Seong practiced the theory of Confucian *geomungo* studies when he played the instrument. Seong compares himself to a *geosa* (eminent person or teacher in his field) in his writing *Buhyujajeon*, where he states the following about his affection for the *geomungo*:

A man likes to play the *geomungo*, which some criticize for idle attitude.
The man replied, "I am not playing with an idle mind but mean to set the
music right. I strive to become a virtuous man and find the ideally neutral

56. *Heobaekdangsjip*, vol. 8, "Dokjwa" 獨坐.

57. *Heobaekdangsjip*, vol. 12, "Jungchushisayaweolmyeongyeojuonggeumtangeum" 仲秋十四夜月明如書擁衾彈琴.

58. *Heobaekdangbojip*, vol. 2, "Wollihongdosuyeosuyubonpachopidaepungchoejeol" 園裏紅桃樹與有本芭蕉被大風摧折.

59. *Heobaekdangbojip*, vol. 3, "Sangchun" 傷春.

60. *Heobaekdangbojip*, vol. 2, "Jatan samsu" 自嘆 三首.

61. *Heobaekdangseupyu*, vol. 1, "Jayeong" 自詠.

harmony (the Middle Way) through music. I don't aim to just play and sing, but wish to cleanse my mind from distortion and bad energy. Such is the reason why honorable men in olden days were never far away from the *geomungo*. Do you still think that I'm idle?"⁶²

He clearly stresses playing with the same attitude as the honorable men of the past, who would cleanse their minds from distortion and bad energy to achieve the Middle Way by always having the *geomungo* nearby and live this way until old age.⁶³ Hong Jeong 洪正, a friend of Seong's son Sechang 世昌 gives an oral recount of Seong playing the *geomungo* alone.

Hong Jeong and government official Seong Sechang were friends. Hong visited Seong one snowy night in January and sit by a window of a room in the east garden to chat, when a *geomungo* would sound through the night. When looking down through the window, an old man had swept away the snow beneath an apricot tree and played the *geomungo*, and his white hair was flattering in the wind. The music that emitted from his fingers was pure yet wondrous. Seong Sechang said it was his father, and if he noticed that a visitor was there, he would get up busily and go inside. Hong would always tell people that "the moon was bright as daylight and the apricot flowers in full bloom, when white hair would flatter and the *geomungo* would sound purely. Like a hermit who returns, a fresh feeling would unconsciously fill the body. Yongjae 慵齋 Seong Heyon can be described as the true appearance of a hermit and spirit of an ascetic."⁶⁴

Seong was often with his nephews Seong Segyun 成世鈞, Seong Seweon 成世源, and his friend Chae Su, and would sometimes invite the famous *geomungo* players and *gisaeng* to listen to and watch their performance. He was especially close to the famous musician, his own teacher Yi Maji, and his disciples Kim Bokgeun and Jeong Okgyeong 鄭玉京. Seong stated, "I would love to live each year like a month,"⁶⁵ on a moonlit spring night when pear blossoms were in full bloom and he listened to Yi Maji's performance. He also

expressed his praise for the talent and support of their lives as musicians when listening to Kim Bokgeun and Jeong Okgyeong⁶⁶ playing the *geomungo*. His affection for Kim Bokgeun in particular can be seen in a poem he wrote after listening to Kim's performance:

This musician's world has reached heights of excellence
His fingers freely performing thousands of melodies
.....
Now you have learned the core technique
The student has surpassed the teacher
.....
Into a grand house within the city walls
I will call on you often and listen to your performance
I shall not raise my eyes like *hyudo*
Work hard not to be a man of silver spoon taking advantage of family
background
李師知樂得天妙 指底變弄千萬調 今汝學法得骨髓 青出於藍青於藍
長安甲第大道邊 頻邀妙手煩妙絃 宜如休屠不舉目 莫作綠韜董少⁶⁷

He thinks Kim Bokgeun has surpassed his teacher Yi Maji in talent and is asking the former not to ruin his life like free riders in old tales, who wanted to achieve fame by sponging off influential families, and rather stick to his status as musician.

The poems and phrases by Seong on the *geomungo* give insight into the time and space, circumstances, music appreciation, and point of view of playing and listening to the *geomungo*. Even though the names of songs or detailed performance descriptions are missing, leaving behind some regret, the poems convey aspects of music appreciation of literati and government officials of his time. Furthermore, they are meaningful sources to understand teacher-student relationships and genealogy by mentioning contemporaries such as Yi Maji, Kim Bokgeun, and Jeong Okgyeong. They also show the relationships between literati and musicians when writing about the practice of hiring and paying the Jangakgwon musicians for small and large festivities in noble households.

62. *Buhyujajeon*, vol.13.

63. *Heobaekdangbojip*, vol. 2, "Jeungyubon isu" 贈有本 二首.

64. *Gijaejapgi*, vol. 3, "Stories from the Old Court."

65. The original text is as follows: "十三夜宿者之第令李師調琴淺酌相酬時月明如畫庭中梨花盛開"
(*Heobaekdangsjip*, vol. 6).

66. *Heobaekdangbojip*, vol. 3, "Cheongjeongokgyeonggeum" 聽鄭玉京琴.

67. *Heobaekdangsjip*, vol. 14, "Chulsukbyeokjesahyeongyubonjeonyobokgeuntangeum" 出宿碧蹄士衛有本錢邀福根彈琴.

Poetic Readings and Banquets

During the 15th century, holding a banquet to enjoy themselves along with fellows was a popular affair among literati and public officials. Similar to famous literati of China who enjoyed *nanjeong* 蘭亭 gatherings, *jungnim* 竹林 gatherings, and *jaetaek* 梓澤 gatherings, Joseon literati would enjoy elegant gatherings for poetry, reading, painting, and playing the *geomungo*. They would mostly get together to compose poems or paint, which was called *sihoe* 詩會 and *gyehoe* 契會 respectively. Seong left numerous texts behind, which would recount such gatherings with much detail.

The most descriptive of these is the record on Kim Yu, who was also known as a *geomungo* enthusiast, in the *Yongjaechonghwa*.

The name of vice minister Kim Yu is Jago. Kim was the grandson of Munchunggong 文忠公 Jo Jun 趙浚, Prince Buwon in Pyeongyang, on his mother's side. He was born into a noble family, traveling much during his younger days without constraints. Nonetheless he liked the Classics and was a good writer. He was highly skilled in calligraphy (*haengseo* and *choseo* font), and his *geomungo* play was beautiful...He liked to host parties and was very famous among his friends. And all of his household goods, including wine bottles and glasses, were exquisite. Kim built a library in Southern river area, while building Ssanggyedang 雙溪堂 hall in the Northern valley of Seonggyungwan, where he would invite his friends every spring to compose poems and have drinks. They were called *samjeol* (three bests 三絕) despite their complacency—excellent in poetry, literature, and playing the *geomungo*.⁶⁸

Kim Yu stated as follows:

I don't like to visit my friends. My house is comfortable enough to invite guests and my fortune large enough to host festivities. The joy in my life is hosting drinks for beautiful guests during a blooming morning or moonlit evening, to Yi Maji's *geomungo*, Do Seongil's 都善吉 *dangbipa* 唐琵琶, Song Jeonsu's 宋田守 *hyangbipa* 鄉琵琶, Heo O's 許吾 *jeotdae*, and Ga Hongran 駕鴻鑾 and Gyeong Cheongun's 輕千金 song under Hwang Hyoseong's 黃

孝誠 conducting. Whether as soloist or in ensemble, I am fond of pouring drinks to my guests and they to me, chatting and composing poetry.⁶⁹

Such gatherings at Kim Yu's villa is mentioned in many other contemporaries' poems. However, only Seong Hyeon lists the names of the musicians. The above describes and lists the Jangakwon musicians including conductor Hwang Hyoseong, Yi Maji, Do Seongil, Song Jeonsu, and Heo O. He mentions that they would play solos or perform as an ensemble accompanied by the song of two *gisaengs*. While the text is written like a quote by Kim Yu, the content reflects Seong's own knowledge and observation of the music.

Gatherings like the above were hosted at Seong's house from time to time as well. In Seong's "Yeohoegayeonjipsiseo" 晦會家宴詩集序⁷⁰ describes such gatherings in detail. The text describes a gathering at Yeohoega, which is the home of Seong's nephew Seong Semyeong 成世明. One of the guests, Yi Sukgam 李淑瑛, states the following about the gathering:

Now Mr. Yeohoe is an important descendent of Jamyong 簪纓, a clan that has studied poetry and painting for a long time. His masterly appreciation of poetry, painting poem, and painting is exquisite. Besides, he has expert understanding of music. When inviting friends or colleagues, he likes to host parties with an abundance of delicate dishes from land and sea. Thus even famous scholars would not return home easily when invited to his house...⁷¹

Seong Hyeon writes about the music at that party as follows:

The wind performer makes a sound loud as a dragon. The percussionist drums with much energy like an alligator's roar. The string performer makes a sound like breaking jade. The singer performs with a beautiful voice like beads on a string. My friends sat across from each other, engaged in conversation and circulating their glasses tirelessly that no one noticed when the music stopped. We eventually composed poems and compiled these later.⁷²

69. *Yongjaechonghwa*, vol. 10.

70. *Heobaekdangmunjip*, vol. 6.

71. *Heobaekdangmunjip*, vol. 6.

72. *Heobaekdangmunjip*, vol. 6.

68. *Yongjaechonghwa*, vol. 2.

Such elegant gatherings with food, drink, and music while mingling with friends can be seen as suitable enjoyment during times of peace.

However, a different section in the *Yongjaechonghwa* shows some concern in the “current” banquet customs as opposed to the “past.”

A lot of customs are not what they used to be. In the past, songs were sung after the banquet and requested from the *gisaeng* after paying her a *jeondu* (money given as a reward 纏頭). There were rules about the food served, and pieces such as “Jinjak mangi” 眞勻慢機, “Jahadong” 紫霞洞, and “Hoengsalmun” 橫殺門 were performed. Wine glasses made their rounds but were filled, yet a little and songs were sung in a low voice, not getting loud or acting in a drunken manner.

Banquets today are all extravagant...Even before the drinks are over, string instruments and drums are brought out in a rush, dancing quickly, not knowing how to rest. Some state it's for society, others it's a welcome of farewell. Banquet tents are erected until far outside the city walls and daily tasks forgotten. Even when only three people gather, instruments are played. Servants from other regions are borrowed and brought in to cook dishes and if something is not tasteful they are beaten that the servants look emaciated day by day. *Gisaengs* are not paid but asked to perform day and night so that their costumes get frayed. So many guests are gathering to request for poems that official musicians 伶官 cannot perform.⁷³

Seong criticizes the change from performing traditional Goryeo instrumental pieces such as “Jinjak mangi,” “Jahadong,” and “Hoengsalmun” to dancing to rushed string music and fast drums. The *Yongjaechonghwa* further introduces several anecdotes on famous banquets by affluent individuals. String music would play day and night at the house of Hong Insan 洪仁山, who gained power and wealth by supporting King Sejo's coup (*jeongnan* 靖難), with countless banquets that paid enormous sums for female entertainers. Yu Banghyo 柳方孝 would hold banquets inviting female entertainers every day. Royal descendant Yeongcheonggun 永川君 Yi Jeong 李定 would become a patron of the local female entertainers who moved to and work in Hanyang, and enjoyed banquets throughout his life. Seong's records that describe real

people's stories are a good reference to the scale and frequency of banquets by the rich and powerful.⁷⁴

Conclusion

In this paper, I looked into the 15th century musical trends through Seong Hyeon's writings about music, which have been neglected so far. As a music enthusiast and supervisor of Jangakwon, Seong had in-depth knowledge of Confucian music ideology and the status of national ceremonial music, and left behind a wealth of music documents

Among his many writings, the *Akhakgwebeom* and the “Akhakgwebeomseo” deal with the development of 15th century national music, the “Jangakwonjemyeonggi” deals the situation of the 15th century national music institute, and the “Hyeongumhapjaboseo” deals with 15th century notation methods and scores. The music-relevant sections of the *Heobaekdangjip* and the *Yongjaechonghwa* give insight into the appreciation and aspects of music by literati and government officials. These texts and content have significant importance in music history as they provide information that is not mentioned in any royal chronicles. They provide detailed information on the establishment of national ceremonial music and practical application, the state of the national music institute, the existence of the *Hyeongumhapjabo*, the music culture, appreciation, and the point of view by literati and government officials.

According to the Seong's texts, the 15th century music trends were based on the following: first, Confucian music theory constituted the foundation of organizing the nation's ideology (*yeak*) as music was believed to influence mankind's customs positively. It was during this period that the theory came to life by organizing and establishing the performance methods, costumes, props, and instrument order. Second, the royal court enabled such establishment by constructing a building to support and develop *yeak* by providing space to manage the musicians and their practice. Third, interest in documenting music was high in the 15th century. King Sejong devised a method to write scores by implementing the square notation system *jeonggan*, which enabled the record

73. *Yongjaechonghwa*, vol. 2.

74. *Yongjaechonghwa*, vol. 10.

of pitch and length of the notes. King Sejo developed the system further by implementing the five number notation *oeumyakbo* so that notes could be inscribed, too. Under King Seongjong, the *hapjabo* was invented in order to include the playing methods. Thus recording, reproducing, and spreading music pieces was possible and Seong's *Hyeonggeumhapjabo* in particular contributed much to spreading the appreciation of the *geomungo* among literati and officials. Fourth, official music 管樂 by the public and at local government posts was enjoyed by literati and officials during work. Privately, on the other hand, they enjoyed song and dance at gatherings and banquets. Lastly, a culture of learning to play the *geomungo* in order to achieve the ideally neutral harmony, or the Middle Way (*junghwajigi*), within the theory of nurturing good temper has become popular among literary and government official circles.

Translated by CHANG Yonok

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Abstract

This paper examines Seong Hyeon's life under the perspective of musicology and the trend of musical culture during his time based on his written records. Seong Hyeon was a 15th century literati and government official as well as a music enthusiast, thoroughly enjoying music culture throughout his lifetime while serving as a supervisor of Jangakwon and a publisher of the nation's music records such as the *Akhakgwebeom*, the "Akhakgwebeomseo," the "Hyeongeumhapjaboseo," the *Heobaekdangjip*, and the *Yongjaecheonghwa* which are significant from a music history perspective in particular because such details are not described in the royal chronicles. Additionally, his writings not only present the establishment of nation's ceremonial music, but also show how it was performed. These musical documents reveal the state of the royal music institute, the existence of the *Hyeongeumhapjabo*, and the way the 15th Joseon literati enjoyed music culture. While there has been some interest in musicology circles on Seong as the author of the *Akhakgwebeom*, researches on the music and dance mentioned in his various records have rarely existed. This paper, therefore, will take a closer look into Seong Hyeon's records, in order to firstly investigate his point of view as a supervisor of the Royal Music Institute on the history and development of court and secondly examine Seong's affection for the *geomungo* instrument and his contemporaries' musical enjoyment.

Keywords: Seong Hyeon, *Akhakgwebeom*, "Jangakwonjemyeonggi," *Hyeongeumhapjabo*, Jangakwon, *yeonhoe*, *geomungo*