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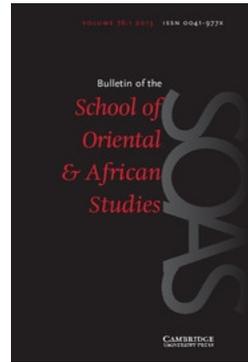
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**Joshua D. Pilzer: *Hearts of Pine: Songs in the Lives of Three Korean Survivors of the Japanese "Comfort Women"*. xix, 191 pp. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. ISBN 978 0 19 975957 6.**

Keith Howard

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JOSHUA D. PILZER:

*Hearts of Pine: Songs in the Lives of Three Korean Survivors of the Japanese "Comfort Women"*.

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A number of texts now exist, including my own edited volume, *True Stories of the Korean Comfort Women* (London: Cassell, 1995), that recount the harrowing tales of women forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese military during the Pacific War. It is generally considered that the majority of the up to 200,000 "comfort women" were Korean. Since the beginning of the 1990s, two decades of testimony collection has resulted in a certain familiarity in the image of the wounded grandmother petitioning, as yet without result, for recognition, apology and compensation from the Japanese state. At the turn of the millennium, Pilzer, reading the testimonies published by then, was struck by how frequently singing – in Korean, Japanese, Chinese, Russian or other languages – was used as a tool by survivors to remember, reflect and come to terms with what cards had been dealt to them during their lives. And so the kernel of the project that is reported here was formed.

Pilzer collected his material during eight years of intermittent fieldwork. The task was clearly not easy, and as a white male working amongst Korean women's groups on a topic that was so long hidden, his achievement is considerable. The account he gives us repeatedly questions the generic and archetypal image of the suffering grandmother, replacing it with a nuanced and detailed account of three former "comfort women", Pak Duri, Mun Pilgi and Bae Chunhui: "there is more to a person than suffering, more than victimization, more than survival and flourishing. These are only a few way stations in an endless cycle of blooming and falling – a wheel of time" (p. 142).

Pilzer states that his account is about listening, to singing, to people's voices, and to what they have to say. The slimness of the volume is therefore compensated for by a freely accessible website containing audio clips, colour photographs and a pronunciation guide. The songs on the website provide perfect illustrations for the text, although those expecting highly polished professional performances may be disappointed (then again, given the folk and popular nature of many of the songs, I find it somewhat curious that the copyright for everything is claimed by the publisher). The pronunciation guide gives voiced clips of the major names and terms encountered in the text, and will doubtless prove useful, though I would argue that abandoning McCune-Reischauer romanization for the current South Korean government system, as Pilzer does here, will do little to make the text readable for non-Korean speakers.

*Hearts of Pine* is a highly interpretive account. It is, at all times, personal, with Pilzer moving amongst the three women, going with them on trips or to the weekly demonstration outside the Japanese Embassy in Seoul, talking, drinking and sharing songs. Often he is accompanied by fellow students or human rights activists; sometimes he switches from Korean to Japanese as he explores the past lives of his informants, and often he is asked to sing. By one of his informants he is chided for cutting his hair: "When you first got here ... you looked like a folk singer, or Jesus or something, but now you look like a middle-aged Korean guy" (p. 110). This is storytelling at its best, with a seemingly effortless interweaving of appropriate contextualization, bringing in materials from trauma studies, oral literature, ethnomusicology and anthropology, as well as offering occasional references to Korean

musicology. Whether the contextualization will be adequate to specialists in each single academic discipline is difficult to say. However, as reflexive ethnomusicology and as a study of music in everyday life, Pilzer does move us forward, significantly developing methodologies reported by, say, Michelle Kisliuk (*Seize the Dance! BaAka Musical Life and the Ethnography of Performance*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), Tia DeNora (*Music in Everyday Life*, Cambridge University Press, 2000) and Deborah Wong (*Speak it Louder: Asian Americans Making Music*, New York: Routledge, 2004), while studiously avoiding the personal wallowing of much auto-ethnography. Just occasionally, his comments on Korea are a little simplistic (such as the comment that most songs in the *taryeong* genre have shaman origins, p. 42), although he demonstrates a high degree of familiarity with everyday Korean life, from the parked buses full of conscripts ready to clamp down on civil unrest, through day-time television, to drinking and eating conventions.

Extending testimonies to full chapter considerations of song in the lives of each of the three women requires building large edifices that mix theoretical statements with detailed textual and musical analysis. The interpretation that makes the volume hang together, then, is considerable. With Pak Duri, we hear how songs are full of both humour and pathos, and how sexual innuendo counters the wounded grandmother identity. Pilzer shows how films and interviews have tackled this disparity, but then argues how Pak embeds the tripartite system of Durkheimian rites of passage in songs (first as sung or danced expressions of vitality, second as reflections on life and, third, turning suffering into laughter). He builds a complex picture that has it that Pak:

... seamlessly moves her listeners from the realm of ordinary language into the exalted language realm of song, expressing the same feeling from different perspectives, as if examining the facets of a diamond. . . . She transforms language from a medium for solitary declaration into a medium for collective singing and empathy . . . She does not linger on the finery of her singerly voice or on the particular musical stamp of an initial refrain (p. 48).

The third woman, Bae Chunhui, reticent, at times distant, and unwilling to provide a testimony detailing what had befallen her as a “comfort woman”, provides Pilzer’s greatest challenge. He demonstrates considerable intimacy – “if there is anyone who would let a song change her life, it would be Bae Chunhui” (p. 124) – but tempers this with her use of song as a “magical real”, as a signifier of her cosmopolitanism and as the building block for an “enchanted sociality”. Bae becomes the supreme singer amongst “comfort women” survivors:

Now she became a different sort of medium, channeling the feelings of others, singing, in part, on their behalf . . . When her voice became the voice of a bird, her voice was opaquely identified with the aestheticized mass-cultural sentiments she conveyed when she sang. There could be identities of self . . . or her voice could be that of an unidentified and divested storyteller (p. 132).

The “comfort women” issue remains topical; unresolved, one recognizes that as the elderly grandmothers die the issue will gradually fade. Pilzer’s text jolts us into not just memorializing, but into recognizing that real women were involved. The real

women have stories to tell to those who have the time to listen, stories that are couched in songs, songs that once enabled them to cope with their squalid existence during the Pacific War, and songs that have allowed them to cope with their subsequent lives.

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NATHAN HESSELINK:

*SamulNori: Contemporary Korean Drumming and the Rebirth of Itinerant Performance Culture.*

xiii, 201 pp., CD. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012. £18.

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This volume examines how, in the years since it emerged in 1978, the Korean percussion quartet SamulNori has created something new while preserving the old. The volume aims to clarify the quartet's association with *namsadang*, a traditional itinerant performance troupe. In his introduction Hesselink stresses the compatibility of the old and the new, stating that through encountering the history of *namsadang*, he is convinced of SamulNori's relevance to tradition in spite of the early criticism that their attempts challenged tradition.

Chapter 1 thus provides a description of the history of *namsadang*, an area neglected by Korean scholars with the exception of folklorist Shim Usŏng. Aligning himself with Shim, Hesselink summarizes its history, from formation to decline and re-birth. Through this process, and particularly by presenting the six repertoires of its heyday, he persuades readers that *namsadang* featured presentational-style music. Bearing in mind the aim of this book, it would have been useful to have been offered more specific links between the original SamulNori members in terms of genealogy, or how they were actually involved in *namsadang* when they were young. Hesselink mentions links only briefly, although he provides new insights into musical exchanges between *namsadang* and SamulNori in terms of the interest created by a 2006 film, *King and the Clown*.

In chapter 2 Hesselink examines the emergence of SamulNori against the background of Korea's 1970s social scene. Two facets are important: *minjung munhwa undong*, the mass cultural movement; and the changing urban musicscape. The latter in particular moved performance onto stages in concert halls, including the Space Theatre – a cradle for creative traditional arts where SamulNori first appeared in 1978. Yet based on an interview with one original SamulNori member, Ch'oe Chongshil, Hesselink suggests that SamulNori was a group that emerged at the intersection between nationalism and the new musical environment. In this, SamulNori represents a cross-section of 1970s Korea. Yet, as with chapter 1, more specific data are needed, perhaps using interviews with other quartet members, detailing, for instance, how the quartet selected their first piece, *Uttari p'ungmul*, from the repertoire of *namsadang*.

Chapter 2 focuses on *Och'ae chilkut*, a traditional *p'ungmul* local percussion band rhythmic cycle. Hesselink observes how it has been adopted by SamulNori, comparing their version with a version performed by a local band from Iri. It might have been better to have considered *Uttari p'ungmul* in the same way, to show SamulNori's musical connection with *namsadang*. Nevertheless, his account