



During the Three Kingdoms Period of ancient Korea (57 BC-668 AD), the three countries used *eum* (音) or *ak* (樂) as terms referring to music. However, music of the Korean peninsula was termed *Hyangak* (鄉樂, provincial music), while Chinese music, which was considered more advanced then, was termed *Dangak* (唐樂, music of Tang dynasty). *Hyangak* means rustic and unsophisticated music. Alongside *Hyangak*, *Sokak* (俗樂, vulgar music) was also used during the Goryeo Dynasty (918-1392). As opposed to *a-ak* (雅樂, elegant music), imported from the Song Dynasty of China, *Sokak* meant shabby and vulgar music. Both *Hyangak* and *Sokak* were terms that were used in contrast to Chinese music, and even until today, national music communities use such terms uncritically. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, *Yangak* (洋樂, Western music) which was acknowledged as further advanced than Chinese music, was implanted in the Korean peninsula, raising the need for a new modern term for Korean music.

### Concept and History of Music on the Korean Peninsula

After Imperial Japan seized the national sovereignty of Korea (1897-1910), Ham Hwa-jin (1884-1948), an *a-ak* musician at *Yiwangjikaakbu* (李王職雅樂部, Royal Music Institute of Yi Household), published *Joseonakgaeyo* (朝鮮樂概要, Introduction to Korean music) in order to write about music played in *Jangakwon* (掌樂院) to the Imperial Household Agency of Japan. Ham Hwa-jin used the term *Joseon-ak*, which, unlike *Hyangak* or *Sokak*, does not include the concept of valuation such as self-depreciation or sense of inferiority, and reflected “*Joseon*’s music,” not Japan’s music. However, the term *Joseon-ak* (music of

Joseon) was confined merely to music the upper class enjoyed during the *Joseon* Dynasty period (392-1910).

The term *Joseon-eumak* (*Joseon*'s music) emerged, as “*eumak*”, the Japanese translation of “music,” was imported to *Joseon* during the Japanese colonial period. Ahn Hwak (1886-1946(?)), who was an independent activist and scholar, introduced this term to encompass both court music for the upper class and *Minyo* (Korean folk song), which differed from Ham Hwa-jin's *Joseon-ak*.

Degenerated into the Japanese colony, *Joseon* and its people came across the principle of national self-determination. Then, while the nation underwent the February 8<sup>th</sup> Declaration of Independence and the March 1<sup>st</sup> Independence Movement, the concept *Joseon-Minjok* (national people of *Joseon*) became prevalent, reflecting people's yearn to escape from Japan's oppression. However, the term *minjok* is the Japanese translation for the German word “volk” and French word “nation,” and is used to refer to terms such as folk, nation and ethnic. In this context, Kwan Kim, a music critic introduced the term *Minjok-eumak* (national music). This term, which was the combination of *minjok* and music, was used to refer to the music of the people of *Joseon*, which is different from that of Japan. *Minjok* here was used to refer to “ethnic,” as well as the Japanese translation of “volk.”

The terms *Joseon-ak*, *Joseon-eumak*, and *Minjok-eumak* were frequently used during the Japanese colonial period. After liberation in 1945, *Gugak* (國樂, Korean national music) and *Gojeon-eumak* (classical music) were used in addition to these terms. *Gugak* is a term accommodating both music for the liberated new nation and *Joseon-eumak*, which many common people enjoyed in the hierarchical society, but not the music of *YiwangjikAakbu*.. The term *Gugak* was first used in *Gugakwon* (national music institute) which was established under the leadership of *Minsokak* (folk music) musicians.

Immediately after liberation, the *Gugak* Committee of the Music Construction Headquarters, an affiliate of the Central Council for the Cultural Construction of Joseon Culture, was inaugurated. It changed its name to the *Gugak* Construction Headquarters, which then was renamed as *Gugakwon* in October 1945. Musicians of *GuwanggungAakbu* (Ancient Royal Court Music Institute, *YiwangjikAakbu* of the Japanese Colonial period) were highly displeased and felt challenged by *Minsok* musicians preoccupying the term “*Gugak*,” but could not find a way to retrieve it. However, as some of the musicians of *Gugakwon*, a center built under the leadership of the *Minsokak* circle, were apprehended for being leftists and others defected to North Korea, *YiwangjikAakbu* requested that the national assembly following the establishment of the Korean government, open the National *Gugak* Center in order to reclaim *Gugak*, which *Minsokak* circle had preoccupied. Eventually, the National *Gugak* Center was built under *YiwangjikAakbu*'s initiative. Then, the Training Center for Performers of Korean Traditional Music, the predecessor of National *Gugak* Middle and High school, opened. Here, *Gugak*, which had been previously used to refer to the current Korean music,

was used to refer to “old music.” As a result, the term *Gugak* was used interchangeably with traditional music, or old music. Besides, as *Gugak* referred to old music, the term “New *Gugak*” was coined, defined as the music of the new nation and new era. This, however, was not generally used. While *Hyangak* and *Sokak*, used until the 19<sup>th</sup> century with an inferior connotation, entailed ‘contemporariness’, terms used after the 20<sup>th</sup> century such as *Joseon-ak*, *minjok* music, *Gugak*, and traditional music all referred to old music that was played in the past. On the other hand, *Yangak* referred to as music of the modern and new era. Meanwhile, after “*Joseon* music” became *Gugak*, “classical music” became a term only used among the Western music community, which indicated Western classical music that emerged in Europe.

After the division of the Korean Peninsula, the North Korean music community mainly focused on modernizing music, while inheriting the old music (heritage) from the Joseon Dynasty in order to establish music for the people of the new [North] *Joseon* (Democratic People’s Republic of Korea). In this sense, it referred to old *Joseon* music as *Gojeon-Ak* (classical music). However, the status of *Gojeon-Ak*, which was represented by *Pansori* (Korean traditional musical storytelling) and *Changgeuk* (唱劇, Korean traditional opera), was degraded amidst the emergence of controversies regarding their ethnic and populist identity. Meanwhile, with *Gojeon-Ak* gradually incorporated into the *minjok* music of the Japanese colonial period, the Research Institute of *Gojeon-Ak* was renamed as the National Ethnic Arts Theater.

### ***Joseon* Music and *Juche* Music of North Korea**

The concept of *Minjok* music, used in North Korea, is related to the music of the past. During the liberation period (1945-1950) of Korea, this term referred to “new music.” In “new music” elements of Western music and old Korean music are integrated. However, though *minjok* music meant “new music of the new era,” this term accommodated the concept of old music, and two of its original definitions were separated into two terms, “modern music” and “*Joseon* music” after discussions in the 1950s regarding the heritage of *minjok* music. Definitions of modern music, which refers to the musical traditions of both old music and Western music were incorporated into the term *Joseon* music. *Joseon* music was therefore used to refer to old music, modern music, and future-oriented music. *Joseon* Music was adopted as the name of the official magazine of the Central Committee of Joseon Musicians Alliance, proving the use of this term.

As *Juche* ideology solidified in the late 1960s, *Juche* music emerged upon the basis of *Minjok* music, or *Joseon* music, and was used as a term representing North Korean music. ■

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