

The changgo
Its history and its music

by Han Song Hiltmann

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Introduction

Korea has a fascinating musical tradition that is still very much alive today. The *changgo* is the most common and visible traditional musical instrument in present Korea. Koreans are very accustomed to it and it is probably the most frequently learned traditional instrument. As its performance practice is part of the general musical curriculum of Korean schools you will notice quickly that most Koreans have learned the rudimental playing techniques of the *changgo*. Every university has its own *p'ungmul* or *SamulNori* club, in which the *changgo* is the central instrument.

We can surely state that the *changgo* is probably the most common and widely used traditional instrument. It is not only a symbol of traditional music but has been consistently applied and commonly used in daily life musical practices, both in today's urbanised Korean society as well as hundreds of years ago in the farming village communities, where the *changgo* played a central role next to the *buk*, *kwaenggari* and *ching*, being a natural part of traditional customs and farming culture.

The farming village culture still defines the general image of the *changgo*. This is in part due to the rediscovery and adoption of folk culture by the *minjung* movement in the 1980s which emphasised in particular the nostalgic folk background of this instrument. Nowadays the *changgo* is strongly linked with the performance practices of *p'ungmul nori* as well as with its contemporary counterpart *SamulNori*.

Nevertheless, the *changgo* is a key instrument in most genres of Korean music, and most notably it is used both in folk as well as in court music or in the music of the *yangban* culture. The *changgo* is also the key musical instrument in the shaman religion. Even the Korean traditional poetry performance of *Sijo* or *Kasa* will at least include a *changgo* to accompany the poet or singer. As such, we see the *changgo* in diverse usage in Korean music where it plays a crucial role.

As folk music was traditionally regarded as less cultivated and vulgar, it is not surprising that the *changgo* and its performers suffered a similar image for a long time. The *changgo* and its musical practices were often not regarded as being very skillful or sophisticated. This perception has of course changed dramatically in recent times.

However, despite its popularity, general cultural-historical information about the *changgo* are not commonly known. There are hundreds of scores and teaching books about the *changgo*, but you will not find a single book, which describes the history or a general theoretical musical background of this instrument. Also, if you talk to *changgo* performers, their musical knowledge is often limited to the *changgo*'s role in their own particular genre. This paper is a first attempt to offer a brief insight of the broad historical and musical culture of this instrument and it summarises researches on the history of the *changgo* and its musical and cultural appearance in vast different genres of Korean music. The topic about the *changgo* seems to be an endless field, as it has many cultural and musical applications. In the following I have focused on its historic background as well as its general musical functions.

The instrument

The *changgo* is a double-headed drum with two strung membranes, which overlap the resonance body. The middle diameter of the body, also known as the hip, or neck of the instrument is smaller than the final diameter. In this description, it is classified as an hourglass drum (S.H. 211.24.) according to the western Sachs/Hornbostel system.¹ Commonly the body of the *changgo* is made of wood, usually carved in one piece out of a paulownia tree (*odongnamu*), a very light material as the instrument is performed seated as well as in dance. Other materials such as pine wood (*sonamu*), chestnut (*pamnamu*) and materials such as quality porcelain (*sagi*) or brick (*kiwa*), gourd (*pagaji*) and metal (*ch'öl*) are also used. The resonator body is made generally from a single piece and comprises two basins (*ullimt'ong*), which are connected by a narrow neck (*chorongmok*). Sometimes the body is made of two interlocking, detachable parts, which had been common among touring musicians *kwangdae* and shamans from the east coast regions and from Jeju. In the manufacturing process a large emphasis is placed on the cut of the middle part, the *chorongmok*. Its scope and size is crucial for good acoustics. The quality of the sound also depends heavily on the quality and thickness of each membrane.

The two pools of the drum instrument have a slightly different volume; the larger pool *kungt'ong* generates the lower tone. The skins of the membrane (*pokp'an / p'yön*) were traditionally stretched on bamboo, although nowadays the skins are more often stretched on a metal ring. The membranes overlap the edges of the resonance body and are connected with ropes, which are each secured with eight hooks (*kamaksoe*) or loops at each membrane. The ropes are pulled in turn by eight straps (*choigae*), which enables a flexible stretch of the membrane. The leather straps are adjusted towards the smaller pools of the resonator. The membrane of the *changgo* is natural animal skin, dog or cow skin for the lower tone, sheep, dog, cow or goat for the higher tone.

The skin is mostly unimpregnated and reacts very sensitively to humidity and can lose its tension, especially during the rainy season. This can be compensated by adjusting the leather straps (*choigae*) on the ropes to tighten the membranes. In this sense the purpose of the *choigae* is to provide a minimal membrane tension but no tuning of the instrument. As there is no definition of the size neither of the membrane nor the resonator, each instrument becomes unique in sound and the *choigae* only provides limited sound adjustments. As such, the *changgo* is not a tunable membranophone.

The hourglass drum appears as a typical drum in North and South East Asia. Its main instrumental feature is its ability to adjust the tension of its double membranes according to climate conditions. This feature is naturally related to its usage in regions with seasonal humidity. This may explain why this specific drum is used primarily in the monsoon regions of Asia.

¹ The term waist drum is sometimes used as well

The *changgo* in Asia and Korea

The hourglassdrum appears in various shapes and sizes in Asia. Their common feature is an adjustable membrane tension, where two membranes are connected by free ropes and only fixated by their own interlocking tensions. Both membranes are not fixed and lie loose on the resonance body. They determine each other's tension as well as sound characteristics. As one membrane directly interacts with the resonance features of the other, some *changgo* manufacturers might choose two membranes as a set, to assure a harmonic sound quality.

We find drums with these very characteristics all over Asia. In India these drums are called *damaru*, *udakai*, *urumee*, and *idakka*. In China they are called *jiegu*, *zhanggo* and *yogo*. In Korea they are called *changgo*, *yogo*, *saeyogo*, and *kalgo*, and in Japan they are called *kakko* and *suzumi*. They all show similarities in their features as described above, and belong to the same family of membranophones. The oldest versions of these drums are Indian in origin and were used as religious Buddhist artifacts.² The geographic distribution of the *changgo* and its transmission processes in Asia possibly follows the spread of Buddhism. The earliest displays of hourglassdrums in Asia, including in Korea, all have a clear Buddhist connotation. Although certain relations can be made, it is very difficult if not impossible to draw a general chronological transmission process from India through China to Korea and Japan as sources are too patchy.

The Chinese *jiieguis* generally seen as the relative of the Korean *kalgo* and the Japanese *kakko*. The *jiiegu* or *chiehgu* (Chieh is an ancient northern tribe in China) was adopted from the Central Asian region of Kucha, an ancient kingdom in the Tarim valley, and was later widely used during the Tang Dynasty.³ Emperor Xuanzong of Tang (712-756) is often referred to as a skilled player of the instrument.⁴ From there, the instrument found its way to Korea where it still remains specifically as a Tang instrument (*Kalgo*) nowadays unused in any Korean traditional setting.

The Wen hsien *ungk* mentions that the Qin emperor Fu Jian (338-385) introduced a double-headed drum called *changgo* (*zhanggo* in Chinese, same characters) again from Kucha.⁵ As we know from the introduction of Buddhism in Korea, direct relations between Koguryŏ and the early Qin (350 - 394) existed, so transmission processes were possible, and often followed the spread of Buddhist culture.⁶ Researchers have also identified transmission processes between Koguryŏ and the northern states of China in relation to shamanistic drum dances.

²Honour, Hugh und Fleming, John 2005. *A World History of Art*. London: Laurence King Publishers.

³Howard, Keith 1988. *Korean Musical Instruments, A Practical Guide*. Seoul: Se-Kwang Music Publishing Co. 121.

⁴Edward H. Schafer 1985. *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand: A Study of T'ang Exotics*. University of California Press. 52-53

⁵Howard 1988; 121.

⁶ In 372, the monk Sundo was sent by Fu Jiān of Former Qin to the court of the King of Koguryŏ bringing texts and artefacts.

Also etymological comparisons have been tried on the Japanese hourglass drum *tsumi* / *tsusumi*, written with the Kanji for drum (in Korean it would be *puk/go*) and the Indian word *dundubhi* (meaning waist drum).⁷

The earliest pictorial evidence in Korea of hourglass drums can be seen on the temple bell Sangwonsa Dong Chong from the Shilla period (57 BC -AD 935) and on paintings of the royal tombs of Koguryŏ (*chipanhyŏngobunbyŏkhwa*, picture no.17) from the 5th–6th Century and on a bronze figure from the 7th century, depicting a musician playing an hourglass drum with his hands.⁸ All these instruments are displayed in a Buddhist context. Furthermore, recently, several hourglass-shaped drums made of ceramic have been excavated that dated back to the early Koryŏ Period.⁹

Etymology and History

The term *changgo* includes all variations of Korean hourglass-shaped drums. The term is a composition of the Sino-Korean characters for *chang* (hit/beat) and *ko* (drum).¹⁰ Terms such as *changgu*, *changgi* or *kochang* are also common. In some rural communities terms such as *ko* (drum) and *p'uk* (simple drum, barrel drum) are also referred to as *changgo* which express its general designation as a percussion instrument. The names *yogo* or *saeyogo* (waist drum or elongated waist drum) appear as well in dictionaries and sometimes in a shamanistic or religious context. This terminology is, however, primarily found in descriptions of ancient *changgos*.¹¹

Koryŏsa provides the oldest written record of the orthography *changgo* as it is used today. The term appears in a passage about the T'aeksŏ (court office, which was responsible for music and the rites) where two *changgoŏpsa* (*changgo* musicians and teachers) are mentioned in a second grade salary listing among 170 other *raksa* (officials, who taught music and performed) during the thirtieth year of the regency of King Munjong (1076).¹² But most important was an entry in the Koryŏsa, dated 38 years later (1114). Here it tells us about 20 *changgos*, which were received as gifts among various kinds of other musical instruments from the emperor Hui Zong of the Song Dynasty to the royal court in Koryŏ during the reign of King Yejong. According to the Koryŏsa this gift was a part of an instrumental setting of the new court rites of the Sung, the so-called *sinak*, meaning new music.¹³ From Chinese sources we can see that these instruments were part of the setting of the royal banquet music and were a mere misunderstanding, because the Korean court had asked for ritual music, which was delivered to them a few years later.¹⁴

⁷Howard 1988, 121

⁸Song, Hyejin 2001. *Han'guk Akki* Seoul: Yeollhwadang. 294. koryŏchong

⁹ Song, Hyejin 2008. *A Study on the Waist-Drum, excavated from Mt. Isong Fortress*. Seoul: Ehwa University, Department of Music;

¹⁰variation: *chang* (long) and *ko* (drum)

¹¹Chang, Sa-Hun 1976. *Han'guk Akki Taegwan*. Seoul: Seoul National University Press, 128

¹²Koryŏ sa 80:2a-6a.

¹³Koryŏ sa 80:2a-6a.

¹⁴ In 1114 Yejong sent a request to the Song Dynasty Emperor Huizong asking for Chinese musical instruments to be sent to his palace in the Koryŏ capital of Kaesŏng so that he could conduct Confucian

This passage of the Koryŏsa is mostly known and commonly interpreted as the first introduction of the *changgo* from China during the Koryŏ period, ironically as a mistake, but sometimes reason enough to disclaim the *changgo* as a native Korean instrument. However, it is quite possible that *changgos* or hourglass drums had existed earlier on the Korean peninsula. Another interesting fact is that the *changgo* has been introduced as part of a banquet music setting and not as part of the Confucian ritual music. This could be a hint of the very early history of the *changgo* as a sacred instrument of Buddhist ceremonies. Buddhist musical rites were abandoned from court when Confucianism became the state ideology and old rites were often reshaped or rearranged into leisure music.

Just four months later, the term *changgo* appears again in the classification system of instruments of the Korean court. The *changgo* is classified as a *tangak* (music of Tang China) instrument as well as a *sogak* (vulgar music) and also appears to be used in Hyangak (local music).¹⁵ This would mean that the *changgo* had already been widely used at the Korean court, indicating it was not only foreign in nature. However, the attribution to musical genesis is not very reliable, since these terminologies distinguished musical styles rather than actual origins. Especially during the regency of King Sejong (who had commissioned the Koryŏsa - the source we are relying on here), many reforms and re-organizations of the court and its music had been made. Arts and culture flourished and it is believed that during that time traditional attributes such as *tangak*, became obsolete.¹⁶

The entry in the Koryŏsa which mentions the *changgo* as a part of the musical setting at the Sung court is important insofar as it corroborates the Akhak Kwebŏm's (Encyclopedia of Music of the Chosŏn Kingdom, 15th century) description of the *changgos* originating from Sung China. The Akhak Kwebŏm also provides us with the earliest illustration of the *changgo* as a drum mullet, which clearly showed that the drum was played with a stick.¹⁷ In the picture the instrument appears as we know the *changgo* today. The features are described in two different forms - as a small drum with a wooden design, and a larger ceramic version. The scale of this *changgo* is actually

rituals in the Koryŏ court. Huizong, apparently misunderstanding the request, sent a set of musical instruments to be used in royal banquet music. (Huizong had, in 1110, for political reasons, granted Yejong the status of "genuine king," and Koryŏ had since then conducted itself with great deference to China. Two years later, in 1116, Yejong sent another petition in which he reiterated his request for ritual instruments, whereupon Huizong sent an even larger gift of musical instruments (this time *yayue* instruments, numbering 428 in total), as well as ritual dance regalia and the appropriate instructions, beginning Korea's tradition of *aak*.)

¹⁵ Koryŏ sa 80:2a-6a.

¹⁶ further references on developments of *aak*, *tangak*, *hayangak* and *chŏngak*:

Lee Byong Won 2007. Introduction to Korean Music. In: *Music of Korea*, Hg. Lee, Byong Won and Lee, Yong Shik. Musicology Series 1. Seoul: The National Center for Korean Traditional Performing Arts. 9.;

Pratt, Keith 1987. *Korean Music, Its History and Its Performance*. Seoul: Faber Music, Jun Eum Sa. 32.;

Lee, Jung Young 1981. *Korean Shamanistic Rituals*. Paris, New York: Mouton. 10. ;

Song 2001;

Robert C. Provine, Jr. 1974. *The Treatise on Ceremonial Music (1430) in the Annals of the Korean King Sejong* In: *Ethnomusicology* Bd. 18, Nr. 1: 1-29, 69-70;

Killick, Andrew P. 2002. *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music* Bd. 7: *China, Japan and Korea*.

Robert C. Provine, Y. Tokumaru, Lawrence Witzleben. New York und London: Routledge.

¹⁷ Akhak Kwebŏm 7:45.1 in: Lee 2000.

quite similar to smaller versions of the *changgo* which are nowadays used in shaman music. The Akhak Kwebŏm states that the *changgo* was originally known as *saeyogo* (long waist drum) and used at the court of the Song Dynasty (960-1279). Then the instrument was played with a bat and from that time on the *saeyogo* was named *changgo*, which would explain the etymology of the Sino-Korean word. Finally, the Akhak Kwebŏm classifies the *changgo* as a Tang instrument.¹⁸

The Akhak Kwebŏm quotes the Wen hsient'ung from 13th century as its main source and states that the *changgo*, *yogo* and *saeyogo* were used in China by the Han (206 BC-220.) and the Wei (220-265) without more precise distinctions. This is more than dubious as the Wen hsient'ung states that these drums had been introduced in the 4th century to China.¹⁹

changgo, yogo and saeyogo

Besides *changgo*, terms such as *yogo* or *saeyogo* sometimes appear in historic musical sources or in rural areas where the instruments have a strong connotation with shaman music. *Yogo* simply means waist drum and suggests the common shape of the *changgo*. It might have been just a general term which included the meaning of *changgo* as well.

The definitions of *yogo*, *saeyogo* and *changgo* in historical sources are ambiguous and a clear differentiation of these terms is difficult. The term *yogo* is sometimes referred to as the small *changgo*, and according to the images and artifacts, the old hourglass drums must have been quite small (Sangwŏnsa Dong Chong, Shilla; Kamŏnsa Chong, Shilla). Presumably the early *changgo* had been smaller but used in larger numbers, according to the amount of *changgo* which had been introduced from the Song Court. The researcher Song Hye Jin argues quite plausibly that as the numbers of *changgo* at the court orchestra decreased (in Chosŏn only one or two *changgo* were used) it had to be built larger to generate a louder sound.²⁰

Interestingly, in historical sources the *yogo* appears mostly in a non-Korean context and is often referred by foreign cultures as a Japanese instrument, for instance in Central Asia, China and Japan.²¹

The Tosa Kangmok (18th century) which describes the culture of Koguryŏ (37 BC - AD 668) describes the *yogo* in the context of a dance called hosŏnmu also called dabguhni, a dance which originated in central Asia and reached Koguryŏ from northern China.²²

The term *yogo* appears in the historic sources of Korean court music where it is clearly classified as a Tang instrument. The Chosŏn Wangjo Sillok describes extensive reform

¹⁸ Akhak Kwebŏm 7:45.1.

¹⁹ Howard 1988, 119.

²⁰ Song 2001, 295.

²¹ So'ng Chong Shillok 10:15b.

²² Tongsa Kangmok 7:4b.

of court music. At the command of King Yŏnsan'gun, Tang Dynasty instruments were reformed. Their new forms emphasized the independent character of Korean court music, an indication that they *could* have been reshaped into a new instrument (as happened to many other instruments such as the string instrument Ajaeng). These instruments in their new form were called *changgo*.²³

A traditional instrument

The *changgo* is generally considered to be a traditional musical instrument, although in contemporary Korea the *changgo* can play a role in many different musical settings. It is probably the instrument most used in non-traditional environments or in cross-over arrangements of traditional and modern music. In fact the *changgo* is an indispensable instrument in the most popular percussion genre called SamulNori. SamulNori artists have developed the *changgo* performance to a new level of artistic sophistication, including the invention of musical styles and new playing techniques. The contemporary image of the *changgo* is closely tied to SamulNori, although SamulNori has never been recognised as genuine traditional music, and is not listed as a cultural asset.

If there is a Korean instrument with a diverse, contemporary, modern and urban application, it is without a doubt the *changgo*. It is probably the most played and sold Korean instrument overseas, not only among the Korean diaspora but also among non-Koreans who have learned to play the *changgo* at a very high level.

The musical context of the *changgo* has expanded rapidly in recent decades and its traditional cultural applications and especially its position in folk culture and in the traditional farming communities has changed dramatically. Nevertheless, the instrument is still hugely popular and used in daily life, particularly in urban societies. Under these circumstances the argument, that the contemporary *changgo* is more a *Korean* but not necessarily a *traditional* instrument makes absolutely sense. Nowadays many Korean instruments have been reformed in usage and shape to be applied as contemporary Korean musical instruments in a very vibrant and modern artistic scene. Including the *changgo* among other “contemporary” Korean instruments would follow a general trend. Musical instruments like the Kayagŭm or the Ajaeng underwent partial modifications, and most importantly a general standardisation, which is especially necessary for tonal instruments in a modern orchestral setting. The modification and the introduction of norms and standards in the assembly process ensure their wide usage and their application to modern requirements of urban stages and contemporary events. And here lies the main difference to the *changgo* instrument, which in my idea still remains as a genuine traditional instrument: Despite the radical change in its musical and cultural context, neither its physical shape nor its assembly process has changed at all. Despite all technical advances and the effort to raise the quality of the instrument, no standardization has been introduced (yet). The *changgo* still appears as it did hundreds of years ago. Of course, sawing and drilling machines have replaced the traditional hand carving of the resonant body and some manufacturers are

²³ Chosŏn Wanjo Shillok, Yoŏn San Kun 11:18a.; Chang 1984, s.v.v. „changgo, yogo“.

even importing pre-carved bodies from China, but the main manufacturing and molding process has not changed at all. Until now, the crucial part of the construction is often undertaken or supervised by a *changgo* performer. But most importantly, there is no single established standardization regarding its size, shape, resonance behavior or lacquering. There is therefore no definition of how a *changgo* should look, nor how big it should be, or how it should be shaped. Its sound and its resonance behavior are also undefined. Besides the tonal difference of right and left, no one can predict the sound of a *changgo*. This means that despite all the technical developments, every single instrument is “hand made” and unique in its appearance and in its sound, a feature that is rather unfitting for a modern instrument. This feature is actually most typical for traditional folk musical instruments, which are usually rich in diversity, form and application.

The *changgo* is first and foremost a drum, and as a membranophone it does not need to have a standardized tune (unlike the western timpani which is tunable). But, surprisingly, unlike many other Korean instruments, the *changgo* has undergone very few changes over time. There have been efforts by Korean manufacturers in the 1990s to introduce plastic *changgo* and indestructible membranes, but none of these developments have survived long term.

In this sense even today the concept of a *changgo* includes an extremely wide range of different instruments. Even in its history we are dealing with many different representations, definitions and names. It might be difficult to get a clear grasp of the instrument, although its diversity and its multiple applications can be seen as its one continuing and defining feature.

Transmission processes

Historical sources mainly provide information about court music. The information we find about the history of the *changgo*, its origins and musical usage can only be a small part of the whole picture. Since the court culture in its self-conception already distinguishes itself from folk culture, non-royal cultural aspects are consciously omitted in the sources. On the other hand, folk culture, its traditions and customs are transmitted orally, and so we can't rely on any written sources. The question whether the *changgo* was introduced and commonly used in Korea, before it was sent by the Song court as the Koryosa describes, is very difficult to state. The follow up question to that is, if the *changgo* has been transmitted from the court into the musical practices behind the palace walls. And was the *changgo* at first a court music instrument and has then emerged into the folk music context?

The court was probably not the only entity that had exchanges with cultures outside of the Korean peninsula. It is quite possible that in the 15th century versions of *changgo* instruments had been known outside the court as well. The many different designs of the instruments throughout its history and specially their inconsistent terminology suggest many forms of the *changgo*. At least continuous influences between court and folk music within the Korean culture can be expected.

Court culture and folk cultures should not be regarded as self-contained systems, but cultural spheres which were constantly under mutual influence and exchange. Interactions and reciprocal impacts of court and folk culture are known. Especially since the 14th Century, where the royal musical culture went through many reforms, which lead to various transmission processes, which could have contributed to the proliferation of the *changgo*.

„After the Japanese invasions of 1592 and 1597 and the Manchurian invasions of 1627 and 1636 (...) the *aak*, *tangak*, and *hyangak* played at court were in decline, although folk music outside the court sphere reemerged.”²⁴ The invasion of the capital in the 16th and 17th century forced many musicians to leave the court and to retreat to rural regions. Still many of the court musical instruments were destroyed, the professional musician carried their musical knowledge with them. There were even times, where the musical practices at court stopped entirely, as during the reign of King Sŏnjo (1567-1608). During Sejong's reign 1300 musicians were employed, the number declined during King Injo's reign (1623-1649) on 630 and while King Hyojong only employed 619 – 98 musicians.²⁵

²⁴Song 2000, 27.

²⁵For further references on transmission processes of court culture:

Song 2000, 27.

Howard, Keith 2006. *Preserving Korean Music: Intangible Cultural Properties as Icons of Identity, Perspectives on Korean Music Bd. 1*. SOAS Musicology Series. Aldershot, Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Limited. 52.

Deuchler, Martina 1992. *The Confucian Transformation of Korea: A Study of Society and Ideology*. Harvard-Yenching Institute Monograph. Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press. 8.

Ho' baektang Chip 10:12a-13b.

Shim, U-so'ng 1994. *Namsadang P'aeYon'gu*. Seoul. Tongmunso' n. 25-32

Song 2000, 219. 103 Vgl.: Chan, Amemiya 1977. *Origins of Korean Mask Dance Drama*. *Korea Journal* Bd. 17, No.1 [Jan.]: 57~64., Cho, Oh Kon 1982. *The Mask-dance Theatre from Hwanghae Province*. *Korea Journal* 22, No.5 [May]: 36~45.37. Chae 2003, 30.

On 1634 we find another noticeable incident, as King Injobanishprofessional musicians outside of the walls of the government district. These musician belonged to the lowest social stratusbut where responsible for some of the performances of *hyangak*.²⁶In the end, they where exiled to the provinces, triggered by the revival of the Neokonfucianism.²⁷This ban meant nothing elsethan a migration of *hyangak*musicians toward rural areas where their practices emerged with folk music.These professional musicians, which once formed the *hyangak*ensemblesat court, probably brought an early knowledge about mask dance performances with them, which is now known as *t'alch'um*and belongs to the performing arts of folk culture. Its is also said, that Korean travelling *namsadang* groups emerged from these profession *hyangak* musicians, and the contemporary SamulNori musicians, see themselves as the direct successors of the *namsadang*.

Last noteworthy observation I would like to add is about the *changgo* instrument commonly usedin the shaman music (*musok / muak*). Their shape resembles strikingly the old depictions of ancient Korean hourglass drums. The size and proportions of excavated ceramics resonance bodys of *changgo* instruments from the Koryo period show striking similarities with the still used*musokchanggo*. If the *changgo* was introduced to its early days as a sacred buddhist instrument,assimilations within shamanist practices arequite possible. The *changgo*then could have been part of a transmission process, as the shamans where exiled out of the capital during the emerge of Confucianism. *Asmuak*is a distinctive musical entity,with a certain degree of a self contained musical culture, an ancient versionof the *changgo* could have survived until today in contained shamanist circles such as the east coast shamanism is. Also the practice of inheriting religious artefacts is quite common among the east coast shaman families, and some of the families still own very old *changgo* instruments. Unfortunately, these thoughts must all remains as hypothesis, as no reliable sources are available on this.

Musical role of the *changgo*

The *changgo* is the most widely used instrument in Korean traditional music and appears in most musical genres and sociocultural settings. Despite the traditional separation of court and folk music, it is an essential musical instrument for both musical cultures. It is unquestionably the most significant percussion instrument and, in the context of Korean musical aesthetics, the *changgo* is almost indispensable for several reasons.

One characteristic of Korean (Asian) music is the emphasis of the very tone itself, its molding and variations. Unlike western music, where the concept of harmony is generated from the relative distance between different tones, and the aesthetics skill derives from its virtuosic arrangement, in Korean music a single tone can be enough to create the main musical moment, and the musician's skill is defined by his virtuoso molding of a single tone.

²⁶Pratt 1987, 47.Chan 1977, 5.Cho 1982, 37.Chae 2003, 30.

²⁷Vgl. *ChungjongShillok Kwon* 95.28a11-12, in: Song 2000, 224.

As the emphasis is on the tone itself, it can be quite long, extended, phrased, molded or vibrated. This means that generally the tonal instruments carry out fewer rhythmic functions. It is not obvious as we are used to very rhythmically played tonal instruments in western music, where instrumental settings often scarcely use percussion at all.

There is no music without rhythm, and - interestingly - Korean music has actually developed one of the most complex and rich rhythmic patterns in Asia.²⁸ Nonetheless, in a Korean musical setting the emphasis of the tonal instruments lies in the creation of the sound itself and in generating the emotional and musical features of this single tone. This also applies to singing. One reason why the pentatonic harmony pattern used in Korean music contains fewer tones than in western music. However, as stated, rhythms remain important and also very complex. Percussion instruments therefore perform a significant role in generating the whole musical moment and are almost indispensable because the percussive and rhythmic framework often relies solely on them.

Regardless of the genre, the *changgo* is found in almost all musical arrangements. Despite differences in their varying usage and musical styles, the instrument has general musical characteristics which I will try to explain in the following:

After analyzing different musical pieces from different genres, it can be stated that the *changgo* part normally defines the rhythmic foundation of a musical piece. If we compare the musical functions of different instruments in an arrangement, it is the role of the *changgo* to play rhythmic structures in the most detail, to mark phrases and to highlight accents.

In this way the *changgo* audibly defines the rhythmic structure, as the tonal instruments do not necessarily highlight any rhythmic accents and sometimes do not even follow the rhythmic framework. It is the *changgo* that must reliably mark phrases, tempi and rhythmic patterns and accentuations. Almost without exception, we find only one *changgo* in a musical arrangement, which confirms its 'conducting' character: two or more *changgos* could not deliver a [clear] lead.

In reverse, when analyzing the structure of musical piece, it can be very helpful to look closely at the *changgo*'s role, as it will deliver you the exact rhythm patterns, the temporal units and the texture and inner composition of the whole musical piece.

In the following I will precise the musical role of the *changgo* performance with the rhythmic concept of *changdan*.

²⁸Lee 2007, 2.

So, Inhwa 2002. *Theoretical Perspectives on Korean Traditional Music, An Introduction*. Korean Music Resources V. Seoul: The National Center for Korean Traditional Performing Arts. 103.

Rhythm concept *changdan*

The main rhythmic style of Korean music appears in the rhythm concept of *changdan*. This term is a composite of the words *chang* (long) and *tan* (short). It describes a specific rhythmic theme, which is consistently repeated through the course of a song, or in a section of the music. *Changdan* is often translated as rhythmic cycle. The concept of one *changdan* can consist of several rhythmic structures or meters.

A *changdan* is a metrical framework, which is determined by its meter, typical tempi, accent and phrasing and can then be identified in a distinctive form. For instance, the *chinyangjochangdan* consists of four 6/4 bars with an overall tempo of MM 30-60. It accents are on beats 1, 5, 7, 13, 14, 16, 18 and 20. The accents can vary within a *chinyangjochangdan*. Several established variations of one *changdan* can exist and a *changdan* is also usually modified continuously during the performance. So distinguishing the original *changdan* can sometimes be difficult.

The form of a *changdan* may vary regionally or from performer to performer. For instance, there are several definitions for the *chinyangjochangdan* with different metrics and accents. So, in this sense, each *changdan* is the sum of its variations, which all refer to an overall theme, that may itself remain abstract. That (abstract) rhythmic theme is identified as *chinyangjo* in this particular case. It could be that you never hear the original *chinyangjo* but only variations of it.

Another key aspect of Korean musical style is its flexibility. What we know as improvisation does not appear as such, since flexibility and variations are always integrated into the music. For example, during the performance of the musical piece *shinawi*, the scale of freedom may range from only ornamental variations to completely improvised sequences. As notation was not traditionally used for musical practice, an arrangement of several *changdan* functions like composed musical episodes, providing a structured reference point for the performers. This is precisely where the function of the *changgo* lies: To provide that very musical reference point, the *changdan* structure. For that reason the central role of the *changgo* is often sometimes that of the role of a conductor of a western orchestra.

In traditional music, artistry is expressed in variation rather than creation. The musical foundation provides a monophonic organized melodic line, which is fundamentally different from the Western idea of harmony. The pentatonic scale is phrased and modified by the instrumentalist in different ways, and his artistic skill consists in his ability to alter, mold, vary and phrase. If we take *shinawi* as an example of the idea of musical creation, it is reflected in the following description:

*The prescribed rhythmic patterns and abstract modal configuration are only points of reference for the entire duration of extemporization in the performance which may last for hours. The juxtaposition of melodic multipart in shinawi is highly unpredictable.*²⁹

The traditional *chǒngganbon* notation system helps to create a visualization both of the musical concept of *changdan* and of its application by the *changgo*. Developed in the 15th century during the reign of King Sejong, it is still in use today. Its usage

²⁹Lee 2008, 36.

underwent a sort of renaissance because, although nowadays there is greater need of notation systems for performances and education, western notation systems sometimes didn't seem to fit with the musical concepts of traditional music.

In the example we see *changgo* notations as part of the *chǒngganbo*. It should be noted that, until the 19th century, this *changgo* music was probably not part of *jeonganbo* scores. Nowadays it has become quite common as the *chǒngganbo* is a composite notation system. What is interesting is the placement of the *changgo* beats in accordance with the main rhythmic structures. As we can see the single strikes of the *changgo* fit the main structural time units of the musical piece.

삼장			二장						一장			상 경 산 (上 靈 山)	정 광 기 곡 (重 光 曲)		
倣	경	싸기	살	살	倣	경	倣	경	싸기	살	倣			출기	倣
		살	경								경	출기	倣	출기	
싸	경	싸	플	倣	살	살	살	살	살	살	살	살	倣	출기	
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													倣	출기	
싸	경	倣	경	살	싸	경	싸	경	倣	경	살	倣	倣	출기	1
				살	살	살	살	살	살	살	살	살	倣	출기	
싸	플	倣	플	살	살	살	살	살	살	살	살	살	倣	출기	
倣	출기	倣	출기	살	살	살	살	살	살	살	살	살	倣	출기	
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				살	살	살	살	살	살	살	살	살	倣	출기	
싸	경	싸	경	살	살	살	살	살	살	살	살	살	倣	출기	
				살	살	살	살	살	살	살	살	살	倣	출기	
倣	출기	倣	출기	살	살	살	살	살	살	살	살	살	倣	출기	
倣	출기	倣	출기	살	살	살	살	살	살	살	살	살	倣	출기	1

상
경
산
(上
靈
山)

정
광
기
곡
(重
光
曲)

Open conclusion

The *changgo* has been part of the Korean court music at least since the 15th century. It is likely that the early versions of the *changgo*, have been introduced to Korea along with Buddhism as early illustrations and crafts display the *changgo* in a sacral Buddhist context. Since then a variety of different instruments with different terminologies such as *kalgo*, *yogosaeyogo* have emerged and foreign exchange processes happened probably more than only once. Transmissions between China and Japan, which are traceable back to central Asian and India have happened. As there exists different version of hourglass drums in the neighbouring countries as well, it can be assumed that different version of the instrument such as the ceramic *changgo*, wooden versions, smaller and bigger versions, which also all had different musical applications, had existed for a long time. The appearance and usage of the *changgo* might have been even more divers that it is today.

Even nowadays there is no standardized version of the *changgo* as its shape and appearance vary according to different genres, musical application and musician.

Since the Chosŏn dynasty the *changgo* has presumably played a key role in defining rhythmic structures and units of musical arrangement. The musical aesthetics of Korea is closely linked specially with this very instrument, as it not only appears in most genres but also is an indispensable instrument in most musical arrangements. The main musical feature is to deliver the rhythmic concept of *changdan* which is an essential musical concept, on which distinctive styles of Korean music occurs.

Used in multiple contemporary and modern musical application, the *changgo* instrument still remains as a genuine traditional music instrument, with a strong folk music characteristic, as neither its physical parts, assembling process nor its resonance and sound features are standardised or formalised.

The *changgo* notation, which is used today is not only distinctively and uniquely Korean, it is also the only abstract notation which has developed from traditional score systems such as the *cheonganbo* and oral musical transcripts of Sijo and Kasa. Interestingly the contemporary *changgo* score system, probably developed in the 20th century and perfectionised by Im Dong-Chang and the SamulNori ensemble includes a breathing concept, which might refer to its origin of singing transcriptions. Further research of musical Sijo transcriptions as well as on the contemporary developments of the *changgo* scores might deliver more information about the contemporary state of mind of *changgo* music and its traditional references.