A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF COURT YEOAK IN THE GORYEO AND SONG DYNASTIES

1. *Introduction*

In the historical traditions of music in both Korea and China, the term Yeoak (female musicians) appears with notable frequency. The concept of Yeoak encompasses two primary meanings: first, it refers to female performers engaged in musical activities; second, it denotes the musical forms performed by these women. The history of Yeoak in Korea can be traced back to the Three Kingdoms period, as evidenced by the depictions of female dancers in Goguryeo tomb murals. In China, one of the earliest retrospective references to Yeoak appears in the *Guanzi* ("Qingzhong Jia"), which records that female musicians existed during the Xia and Shang dynasties.[1] Because the *Guanzi* was compiled long after the periods it describes, however, the historical reliability of this account requires careful textual and historical verification. Furthermore, historical sources from both China and Korea, spanning different historical periods, preserve scattered references that attest to the existence and musical activities of Yeoak.

However, within the framework of the feudal order, the social status of women in both societies was generally regarded as inferior to that of men. At certain points in history, systems such as the gongnyeo system, in which women were treated as tribute, were also in operation.[2] Owing to such social perceptions, official state-compiled documents in both Korea and China contain only limited references to Yeoak; even when such references appear, they

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[1] Fang, Xuanling. *Guanzi*. Supplementary annotations by Ji Liu. Collated by Xiaoyi Liu. Shanghai: Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House, 2015, 450.

[2] Piao, Enyu. "The Role of 'Gongnyeo' (Tribute Women) in the Cultural Exchange between Korea and China." *Chinese Studies* 53 (2015): 223–239.

remain in highly fragmentary form. Consequently, research on ancient Yeoak is inevitably constrained, relying largely on isolated records and thus confined to a limited scope of investigation.

Although Yeoak played a significant role in the musical histories of ancient Korea and China, a systematic elucidation of this subject remains an important task for future research. To date, studies on Yeoak in Korea have focused primarily on the Joseon dynasty. During this period, arguments for the abolition of Yeoak emerged on the grounds that it was morally corrupt and incompatible with Confucian norms, resulting in a contradictory situation in which the flourishing of Yeoak coexisted with persistent demands for its suppression—an issue that has drawn considerable scholarly attention. Furthermore, the relatively abundant documentary sources from the Joseon period have facilitated the development of related research. In contrast, specialized research on Yeoak of the Goryeo dynasty remains scarce, limited primarily to two studies by Jinkyung Lee[3] and Minkoo Kang[4].

Lee's study seeks to demonstrate the continuity between Yeoak of the Goryeo and those of the Joseon dynasty, focusing primarily on processes of historical transformation based on documentary evidence. In this context, Yeoak is understood as a category distinguished from gongin (court musicians) and yeongin (court performers). Based on an examination of Yeoak affiliated with the Jiaofang, this study concludes that their performances were primarily centered on ritual ceremonies and court banquets. However, its scope is limited as the analysis centers predominantly on the Jiaofang, without providing a comprehensive examination of the broader institutional framework within which Goryeo Yeoak operated. Kang's study, by contrast, investigates the relationship between the literati and gisaeng in the Goryeo and Joseon dynasties through an analysis of literary sources. It elucidates the nature of the sexual and emotional fantasies that the literati projected onto gisaeng, as well as the underlying structures of perception embedded within these representations. Through this, the study concludes that the literati perceived gisaeng as beautiful beings and objects of affection, and regarded their interactions with them as refined and aesthetically valued practices. Although Suh, Rhee, and Choi do not take Yeoak of the Goryeo dynasty as their direct object of study, their works provide important insights into the study of female musicians from the

[3] Lee, Jinkyung. "A Documentary Study on Yeoak (Female Court Musicians) of the Goryeo Dynasty." Master's thesis, Hanyang University, 1996.

[4] Kang, Minkoo. "Fantasy on the Gisaeng of Korean Medieval Noblemen." *Journal of Oriental Classical Literature* 64 (2015): 53–90.

perspectives of ethnomusicology and gender studies. Suh's study examines gisaeng in the Joseon dynasty through the combined lenses of music sociology and gender studies, focusing on their professional identities and musical practices. It demonstrates that gisaeng were not merely objects of entertainment, but rather agents who exercised professional expertise across diverse musical contexts and developed a degree of subjectivity.[5] Rhee's study, by contrast, analyzes visual materials from the colonial period and argues that gisaeng were not simply passive subjects of representation, but actively participated in the production of images, thereby constructing their own subjectivity.[6] Choi's study focuses on charitable performances by gisaeng during the colonial period, showing that they engaged in public welfare activities as a means of overcoming social stigma and, in doing so, gained public recognition and developed new social roles.[7] While these studies differ from the present research in terms of historical context and primary objects of analysis, they nonetheless offer a valuable methodological framework for examining the subjectivity and social roles of female musicians, although they do not directly address the institutional and historical conditions of Yeoak in the Goryeo dynasty.

In China, research on Yeoak has been concentrated primarily on the Han and Tang dynasties, while studies on Yeoak in the Song dynasty remain relatively limited. Research on Song dynasty Yeoak within Chinese academia has primarily been conducted by scholars such as Fenggang Wen, Zhenyu Wu, Jiabei Li, Tiantian Meng, and Hao Yu. Fenggang Wen undertakes a comparative study of Yeoak in the Tang and Song dynasties, demonstrating that while Tang Yeoak were large in scale and centered on singing and dance, Song Yeoak became more compact and evolved to encompass a wider range of performance forms, including miscellaneous theatrical performances.[8] Zhenyu Wu argues that although Yeoak contributed to the transmission of art and culture, it existed as a dual entity constrained by social and status-based limitations.[9] Jiabei Li demonstrates

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[5] Suh, Jiyoung. "Vernacular Music and Female Musicians in Late Chosŏn Korea, 1700–1897." Doctoral dissertation, University of British Columbia, 2019.

[6] Rhee, Jooyeon. "Beyond the Sexualized Colonial Narrative: Undoing the Visual History of Kisaeng in Colonial Korea." Journal of Korean Studies 27, no. 1 (2022): 37–64.

[7] Choi, Heeyoung. "From the Lowest Class to Becoming Benefactors: Benefit Concerts of Kisaeng in Colonial Korea." European Journal of Korean Studies 24, no. 2 (2025): 155–178.

[8] Wen, Fenggang. "A Comparative Study of Female Musicians in the Tang and Song Dynasties." Master's thesis, Henan University, 2012.

[9] Wu, Zhenyu. "A Study of Musical Courtesans in the Two Song Dynasties." Master's thesis, Shanghai Normal University, 2018.

that Yeoak under the musical household system played a meaningful role in economic and cultural development despite institutional constraints.[10] Tiantian Meng argues that Yeoak in the Song dynasty, notwithstanding such constraints, actively contributed as a cultural agent to the development of Sayak.[11] Hao Yu further contends that Yeoak, as key intermediaries linking creators and audiences, exerted a decisive influence on the dissemination and development of lyric music.[12] Based on these research achievements, it can be confirmed that Chinese academia has actively conducted multifaceted studies on Yeoak, encompassing the characteristics of court and popular Yeoak, administrative institutions, performance venues, the musical household system, performance repertories, social status, and the relationship between Yeoak and literature.

As discussed above, although research on Yeoak in Korea and China has made meaningful progress, numerous issues remain unresolved. In particular, comparative studies examining Yeoak[13] in Korea and China remain extremely scarce to date. Given the long and continuous historical trajectories of both Korea and China, a comprehensive investigation spanning all periods is impractical. Accordingly, this study limits its scope to the Goryeo and Song dynasties, a period characterized by particularly active exchanges between the two polities.

Furthermore, considering that Goryeo's administrative institutions were modeled on those of the Song and that musical forms were extensively transmitted from the Song, it is reasonable to assume a degree of interrelation between Yeoak in the two societies. In particular, during periods when Confucian ideology operated as a dominant normative principle across society, the institutional and cultural ties between Yeoak in the two polities appear to have become especially close. Proceeding from this premise, the present study adopts gender performativity and marginalization[14] as its theoretical framework in order to

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[10] Li, Jiabei. "An Exploration of Female Music under the Music-Registry System of the Two Song Dynasties." Master's thesis, Henan Normal University, 2022.

[11] Meng, Tiantian. "Research on Women's Music of the Song Dynasty." Master's thesis, Northwest Normal University, 2024.

[12] Yu, Hao. "On the Relationship between Song Lyrics (*Ci*) and Female Music." *Huangzhong (Journal of Wuhan Conservatory of Music)*, no. 1 (2012): 69–74.

[13] For the sake of convenience in the present discussion, this study employs the term Yeoak as a comprehensive concept encompassing both female performers and the music they performed.

[14] Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990, 179–190; Young, Iris Marion. *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990, 53–62.

examine the dual position of court Yeoak: they were incorporated into state ritual systems, yet at the same time remained socially marginalized. Accordingly, this study develops its analysis around the following comparative questions: through which institutions were Yeoak managed in Goryeo and Song, respectively, and what differences can be identified in their performance forms and repertories? Moreover, how did differing political and social contexts shape the social status of Yeoak in each society? To address these questions, the present study proceeds along the following lines of inquiry. Accordingly, this study proceeds in three stages. First, it reconstructs the musical institutional systems of the Goryeo and Song dynasties, identifying the institutions to which Yeoak were affiliated and within which they operated, thereby clarifying the administrative frameworks governing their organization and maintenance. Second, it examines the performance forms and repertories of Yeoak in the two countries, investigating how performances were conducted and what repertoires were presented. Finally, it analyzes the social status and position of Yeoak, considering both the social strata to which they belonged and the ways in which they were perceived and treated in contemporary society. Through the foregoing analyses, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive elucidation of the nature of Yeoak in the Goryeo and Song dynasties. It further argues that, despite being subjected to gendered inequalities in comparison to male musicians, Yeoak fulfilled distinctive social roles as key transmitters of artistic culture in both societies. In addition, by reexamining the historical status of Yeoak, who, despite institutional constraints and social prejudice, were indispensable to the formation and development of court culture, this study seeks to offer a new perspective on Yeoak studies.

2. *Musical Institutions and Yeoak in the Goryeo and Song Dynasties*

2.1 Musical Institutions and Yeoak in the Goryeo Dynasty

The musical institutions of the Goryeo dynasty consisted of the Daeakseo, Gwanhyeonbang, Aakseo, Palbangsang, and Jiaofang.[15] Each of these

[15] In *Goryeodogyeong*, Xu Jing regards the Gyeongsiseo as a musical institution of Goryeo. However, although *Goryeosa* contains numerous records concerning the Gyeongsiseo, there is no instance in which it is explicitly described as an office overseeing music. Therefore, based on the *Goryeosa* records, it is reasonable to interpret the Gyeongsiseo not as a musical institution, but as an office responsible for supervising the marketplace and stabilizing prices. (Piao, Enyu. *Goryeo Dangak (Tang Music of the Goryeo Dynasty)*. Seoul: Munsacheol, 2010, 190–192.)

institutions fulfilled distinct functions and roles, collectively forming the core framework for the administration of court music and the operation of Yeoak. The functions and hierarchies of Goryeo musical institutions varied according to the types of music they performed, and the performance practices and social status of Yeoak were similarly shaped by their institutional affiliation. This differentiation of institutional hierarchy was not merely a matter of administrative convenience; rather, it constituted an institutional expression of the way state power distinguished and regulated musical practices and their performers according to gender, status, and genre. Therefore, before examining the institutional and social position of Yeoak, it is necessary first to consider the structure and functions of the musical institutions to which they belonged.

According to the *Goryeosa*[16], a record indicates that during the reign of King Mokjong (r. 997–1009), an administrative official titled Yeong was appointed to the Daeakseo[17], suggesting that the institution was already in existence at that time. In the 34th year of King Chungnyeol's reign (1308), the Daeakseo was renamed Jeonakseo, and thereafter the designations Daeakseo and Jeonakseo were used interchangeably on several occasions until the fall of the Goryeo dynasty.[18] The Daeakseo was a musical institution composed of administrative personnel as well as male musicians and Yeoak who performed at various court events centered on the royal palace. Although no detailed documentary records concerning the exact composition of its personnel have survived, the *Goryeodogyeong* by Xu Jing records that the number of Yeoak of the Daeakseo frequently employed by the king reached 260, from which it may be inferred that a considerable number of performers were affiliated with the institution.[19] Furthermore, in Vol. 80 ("Stipends") of the *Goryeosa*, the entry for "Daeak gwanhyeonbang" records the stipends of instructors responsible

[16] It should be noted that all citations of *Goryeosa* in this study are based on materials provided by the National Institute of Korean History. https://db.history.go.kr/goryeo/

[17] *Goryeosa*, vol. 77, Baekgwan 2: "During the reign of King Musong, the Daeakseo was overseen by an official (yeong)."

[18] Song, Bang-song. "The *Daakseo* and *Gwanhyeonbang* of Goryeo." *Collected Papers on Korean Performing Arts* 4 (2001): 283.

[19] In Xu Jing's *Goryeodogyeong*, it is recorded that the Daeaksa consisted of 260 personnel and was always directly employed by the king. Next was the Gwanhyeonbang, composed of 170 personnel, followed by the Gyeongsisa, which comprised approximately 300 personnel.

for Dangakgi[20] and Hyangakgi, as well as those of the Eopsa, who taught and directed dance. From these records, it can be confirmed that the Daeakseo and Gwanhyeonbang were primarily responsible for Dangak (Tang-derived court music) and Hyangak (native Korean court music).[21] The fact that the number of Yeoak reached 260 suggests that they were not merely auxiliary performers, but occupied a central position in state rituals and royal banquets. Yet their existence was consistently defined within a framework of subordinate service to the state and royal authority. Their performances were not simply artistic practices; they may also be understood as a means through which gender order was reproduced, as women's bodies and roles were repeatedly enacted in prescribed ways under the gaze of state power. The greater the state's demand for Yeoak, the more deeply their status-based subordination was reinforced, revealing a structural contradiction in their position. Thus, Yeoak occupied a dual position: they were mobilized as central performers within the sphere of court performance, yet remained marginalized at the institutional and social levels. Ultimately, the gap between their artistic role and their social status should not be understood merely as a reflection of the status system, but as a structural outcome of state power, which operated through the intersection of gender and status in order to control and utilize female musical performers.

The Gwanhyeonbang was established in the 30th year of King Munjong's reign (1076). However, it was not until the 11th year of King Gongmin's reign (1362) that officials were formally appointed to the institution, at which point it came to assume responsibility for japgwonmu (serve in practical administrative positions within a specific temporary government office).[22] In other words, the fact that the Gwanhyeonbang operated under the supervision of the Daeakseo for approximately three centuries, without developing an independent administrative structure, indicates that the functions of the two institutions were not clearly separated but substantially overlapped.[23] Owing to

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[20] During the Goryeo period, music was classified into three categories: Aak, Dangak, and Hyangak, and the classification of musical instruments corresponded to this system. Specifically, instruments used to perform Aak were designated as Aakgi, those used for Dangak as Dangakgi, and those for Hyangak as Hyangakgi. This system of categorizing both music and instruments has persisted to the present day and represents a unique classification framework applicable exclusively to Korean traditional music.

[21] *Goryeosa*, vol. 80, section Nokbong: "Daeak Gwanhyeonbang."

[22] *Goryeosa*, vol. 77, section Baekgwan 2.

[23] Piao, Enyu. *Goryeo Dangak (Tang Music of the Goryeo Dynasty)*. Seoul: Munsacheol, 2010, 181.

the close institutional relationship between these two bodies, the terms "Daeak gwanhyeonbang" and "Yangbu" (the two divisions) were used interchangeably in the records of Vols. 14 and 19 of the *Goryeosa*.[24]

The Daeakseo and Gwanhyeonbang performed not only Dangak and Hyangak but also Aak. However, following the establishment of the Aakseo in the 3rd year of King Gongyang's reign (1391), responsibility for the performance of Aak was transferred to this institution on a professional and specialized basis. In other words, prior to the founding of the Aakseo and its assumption of exclusive responsibility for Aak, the Daeakseo and Gwanhyeonbang functioned as comprehensive musical institutions that jointly performed Dangak, Hyangak, and Aak alike. This process of genre integration and separation suggests that, toward the late Goryeo period, the state reorganized its musical system in a direction that more systematically differentiated the functions and ritual status of music. In particular, the separation of Aak was closely connected to the expansion and deepening of Confucian ideas of ritual and music, or Yeak, and may also be understood as a process of drawing gendered boundaries by confining Aak to a male-centered space of state ritual and excluding Yeoak from that sphere.

The Aakseo was a musical institution established in the 3rd year of King Gongyang's reign (1391) for the training and performance of music associated with the Royal Ancestral Shrine (Jongmyo) and the Ilmu ritual dance.[25] Although Aak had already been introduced from the Song dynasty in 1116, the Aakseo itself was not founded until 1391. This chronological gap indicates that, for approximately 280 years—from the introduction of Aak to the establishment of the Aakseo—the performance of Aak was undertaken by the Daeakseo and Gwanhyeonbang. In other words, the Aak that had originally been performed by these two institutions was separated in the 3rd year of King Gongyang's reign and assigned to a newly established independent institution, the Aakseo. This institutional reorganization suggests that the Aakseo assumed exclusive responsibility for Aak and that Yeoak were not affiliated with it. This point goes beyond a simple matter of personnel assignment. It shows that, in the process of elevating Aak to the highest level of state ritual on the basis of Confucian ideas of ritual and music, Yeoak were not recognized as legitimate bearers of ritual authority. In other words, the exclusion of Yeoak from the Aakseo was an institutional practice through which state power placed women outside the sphere of official ritual. This demonstrates that the social

[24] *Goryeosa*, vol. 14.

[25] *Goryeosa*, vol. 77, op. cit.

marginalization of Yeoak was not merely a customary practice, but the result of systematic structuring at the institutional level.

The *Goryeosa* contains only three references to the Palbangsang[26], all of which are fragmentary in nature, thereby making a systematic analysis of this institution difficult. Nevertheless, these three brief accounts suggest that the Palbangsang performed in conjunction with the Daeakseo and Gwanhyeonbang, and that in the 32nd year of King Gojong's reign (1245), the number of musicians affiliated with the Palbangsang exceeded 1350.[27] Furthermore, the *Goryeosa* records indicate that the musicians of the Palbangsang were responsible for performances at court banquets and in service of the king. However, it remains unclear whether Yeoak was affiliated with the Palbangsang. Accordingly, this study excludes the Palbangsang from its examination of Yeoak in the Goryeo dynasty.

The Jiaofang was a musical institution of the Goryeo dynasty that, together with the Daeakseo and Gwanhyeonbang, was responsible for numerous performances. It is presumed that the Jiaofang system, originally established during the Tang dynasty and subsequently inherited by the Song dynasty, was introduced into Goryeo from Song China. According to the *Goryeosa*, there is a record in 1009, the first year of King Hyeonjong's reign, stating that "the Jiaofang was abolished and more than one hundred palace women were released", indicating that the institution had already existed prior to that time.[28] Although the Jiaofang was abolished by King Hyeonjong, it was soon reestablished and continued to exist until the late Goryeo period. The repeated abolition and reestablishment of the Jiaofang shows that, although the Yeoak system could become the target of temporary reform, it was continually restored in response to the structural needs of the state. This suggests that Yeoak functioned as an institutionally indispensable presence in the operation of state rituals and banquets. At the same time, the cycle of abolition and restoration also reveals that Yeoak were treated as instrumental figures who could be mobilized or dismissed at any time according to the needs of state power.

During the reign of King Munjong, as Song musical culture was actively received, the female performers (yeogi) of the Jiaofang intensively studied

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[26] Records pertaining to the Palbangsang can be found in *Goryeosa*, vols. 26, 74, and 129.

[27] *Goryeosa*, vol. 129: "Approximately 1,350 artisans of the Palbangsang, all fully attired, entered the garden to perform music, and the sounds of various instruments and songs resounded throughout heaven and earth."

[28] *Goryeosa*, vol. 4.

Song banquet music. As a result, performances transmitted from the Song dynasty—including Pogurak, Gujanggibyeolgi, Wangmodaegamu, and Dapsahaenggamu—were staged at the Yeondeunghoe and Palgwanhoe festivals in 1073 and 1077. The fact that female performers of the Jiaofang were responsible for learning and performing foreign musical genres suggests that Yeoak functioned not merely as entertainers, but as practical mediators of cultural exchange between states. Nevertheless, despite this cultural role, the social status of Jiaofang Yeoak remained fixed in a subordinate and marginal position. Within a complex structure of oppression in which gender and status intersected, the cultural contributions of Yeoak did not translate into an elevation of their social standing.

Musicians affiliated with the Jiaofang, together with those of the Daeakseo and Gwanhyeonbang, engaged in active performance activities at royal court assemblies, ceremonial court congratulations, various celebratory events, royal processions, and numerous banquets featured prominently in court life. A considerable number of Yeoak were incorporated into the ranks of musicians of the Jiaofang, as evidenced by the designation Yeoak of the Jiaofang. Furthermore, during the reign of King Chungnyeol(1274–1308), there are records indicating that Ginyeo from the provinces were selected to supplement the personnel of the Jiaofang.[29] These records indicate that the Ginyeo of the Jiaofang were selected from among the professional female entertainers throughout the country, and were occasionally supplemented by gwanbi (official female attendants) and Gungnyeo (palace women). The practice of conscripting provincial gisaeng and gwanbi to supplement the personnel of central musical institutions shows that the state did not treat Yeoak as autonomous artistic agents, but organized and managed them as a status-bound group obligated to provide service. This offers a clear example of the state's dual attitude toward Yeoak: while actively utilizing their artistic abilities, it simultaneously fixed their social status within the lower strata through a structural mechanism of control.

The musical institutions of the Goryeo dynasty have been examined above. The Aakseo, as a specialized institution for the performance of Aak, did not include Yeoak, while the presence of Yeoak within the Palbangsang remains difficult to determine due to the paucity of documentary evidence. Excluding these institutions, it can be confirmed that Yeoak were affiliated with the Daeakseo, Gwanhyeonbang, and Jiaofang, where they actively participated in a wide range of performance activities. These findings go beyond identifying the institutions to which Yeoak belonged and call for a more substantive analysis.

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[29] *Goryeosa*, vol. 29.

The absence of Yeoak from the Aakseo first suggests that Aak, as the core domain of Confucian state ritual, was a space that embodied a male-centered order. Yeoak were consequently excluded from the central sphere of state ritual and confined to the comparatively peripheral performance domains of Dangak and Hyangak. This exclusion may be understood as an institutional arrangement through which state power assigned Yeoak only particular gendered performance roles within the order it had constructed. At the same time, the dispersal of Yeoak across several institutions—the Daeakseo, Gwanhyeonbang, and Jiaofang—attests to a substantial institutional demand for Yeoak within the state system. Yet this very institutional incorporation also reveals a paradoxical structure: it served not to overcome, but rather to deepen, the social marginalization of Yeoak. This point is especially significant from the perspective of marginalization theory.

2.2 Musical Institutions and Yeoak in the Song Dynasty

The musical institutions of the Song dynasty included the Dayueju (also referred to as Dayueshu, Taiyueshu, or Taiyueju), the Guchuiju, the Jiaofang, the Xianshaoyuan, the Yunshaobu, the Junrongzhi, and the Dashengfu. Each of these institutions assumed distinct functions and roles, such as state rituals, court assemblies, banquets, and ceremonial processions, thereby constituting an organized system for the administration of court music. The Song dynasty inherited aspects of the Tang dynasty's musical institutions and was responsible for the performance of ritual music, banquet music, and various ceremonial registers.

The Dayueju was an institution responsible for performing music at state rituals and court assemblies, and its significance is underscored by the fact that it was established immediately in 960, the founding year of the Song dynasty. The Dayueju performed two distinct types of music—Yayue (known as Aak in Korea) and Guchui music (ensemble music composed of percussion and wind instruments)—in accordance with specific procedures and requirements of ceremonial occasions.[30] Although direct documentary evidence concerning the selection and composition of its musicians is lacking, it may reasonably be inferred that the institution was composed exclusively of male performers, given its responsibility for performing Yayue and Guchui music at state rituals and court assemblies.

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[30] According to *Songshi*, juan 164, the institution referred to as the Dayue was responsible for the instruction and training of grand court music, as well as for the performance of court dances, guchui music, and ceremonial signaling functions.

The Guchuiju, established in 963, was primarily responsible for performing Guchui music used in imperial processions, military displays, and other ceremonial occasions. As a form of military music, the performers of Guchui music were often recruited from the army, although in some cases musicians from the civilian population or other government offices were temporarily enlisted. Given its affiliation with the military music tradition, performances of Guchui music were conducted exclusively by male musicians.

The Jiaofang, a musical institution that evolved from the Tang dynasty's Jiaofang system, was organized into the Sibu-yue (Four-Section Music) during the early Northern Song period and was primarily responsible for musical performances at court banquets. Historical sources record only three of the four sections of the Sibu-yue: the Faqubu, the Qiucibu, and the Gudibu. Scholars have conducted extensive research regarding the identity of the fourth section, with some arguing that it was the Daqubu, while others propose it was the Zuobu.[31] Subsequently, the Jiaofang abolished the Sibu system and was reorganized into the Shisanbu (Thirteen Sections). The institution encompassed a diverse range of performers, including both male and Yeoak. This indicates that the Goryeo Jiaofang likewise functioned as a core institution to which Yeoak were affiliated, demonstrating that both states used the Jiaofang as a central institution for the organization and management of Yeoak. Although Jiaofang experienced a reduction in scale during the Southern Song period, its performance functions continued to be maintained.

The Xianshaoyuan was a royal musical institution established during the reign of Emperor Taizong of the Song dynasty, characterized by the principle that its performances were intended exclusively for the enjoyment of the imperial household and were not publicly accessible. Its personnel consisted primarily of palace women affiliated with the imperial consorts, forming a female musical ensemble drawn from families of respectable social status. This contrasts with the case of Goryeo, where Yeoak were incorporated into lower-status groups such as gisaeng and gwanbi, and shows that the Yeoak of the Song Xianshaoyuan were granted relatively higher social standing. Nevertheless, despite these differences in status, Yeoak in both states shared a common structural condition: they performed subordinate service under the control of state power. As the performances of the Xianshaoyuan were principally intended for the internal enjoyment of the court, they were generally not accessible to officials. This shows how gender order was

[31] Wang, Haoran, and Huan Yu. "A Study of the Development of Song Dynasty Culture through Music Institutions of the Two Song Dynasties." *Modern Music*, no. 7 (2005): 87.

institutionally embodied through the strict control of the bodies and performances of Yeoak under the gaze of state power. Nevertheless, historical records from the reign of Emperor Zhenzong (968–1022) indicate that Xianshaoyuan performers were occasionally employed at banquets attended by princes and officials. In such cases, special arrangements—such as the use of screens or the placement of performers beneath pavilions—were implemented to prevent officials from directly viewing the appearance of the Yeoak. This practice constitutes a distinctive institutional feature of the Xianshaoyuan.[32] These physical barriers were not merely formal expressions of ritual propriety; they may be understood as institutional practices that confined the bodies of Yeoak within gendered boundaries defined by state power and positioned women at the margins even within the space of performance. It was not until the reign of Emperor Huizong of the Song dynasty (1082–1135) that the female performers of the Xianshaoyuan were allowed to participate in banquets held for court ministers. During the Shaoxing period, when the Jin dynasty invaded, Emperor Gaozong of the Song (1107–1187) released over 200 female performers from the Xianshaoyuan outside the palace to prevent them from being seized by the invading forces, reflecting concerns that the Jin might demand the transfer of these musicians.[33]

According to the *Song Shi* (History of the Song), Vol. 142, "The Yunshaobu refers to Huangmen music" (vol. 142, *Yue* 17, pp. 3359–3360). The Yunshaobu was established in the fourth year of the Kaibao era (971) and was organized by selecting eighty capable eunuchs from among the imperial attendants of Guangzhou, who were trained in music at the Jiaofang. Initially known as the Xiaoshaobu, the institution was renamed Yunshaobu in the first year of the Yongxi era (984). The Yunshaobu was responsible for performances at court banquets and various ceremonial occasions, and its designation as Huangmen music reflects the fact that its performers were recruited from among eunuchs. Its performance repertoire included Daqu, miscellaneous theatrical performances, and puppet plays.

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[32] Shao, Bowen (Song Dynasty). *Shao Shi Wen Jian Lu (Records of Things Seen and Heard by Mr. Shao)*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1983, 8. Meng, Tiantian. "Research on Women's Music of the Song Dynasty." Master's thesis, Northwest Normal University, 2024, 24.

[33] Zhao, Shenzhi (Song Dynasty). *Zhongxing Yishi Jijiao (Collected and Edited Edition of the Lost History of the Restoration)*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2018, 266. Meng, Tiantian. "Research on Women's Music of the Song Dynasty." Master's thesis, Northwest Normal University, 2024, 24.

The Junrongzhi was responsible for ceremonial displays and the performance of military music during imperial processions, often adopting the form of mounted performances. Although its primary repertoire consisted of military music, the institution occasionally collaborated with the Jiaofang to perform banquet music[34] and also staged miscellaneous theatrical performances.[35] By the Southern Song period, the Junrongzhi gradually declined, ultimately being abolished in the thirtieth year of the Shaoxing era (1160).

The Dashengfu was established in the fourth year of the Chongning era (1105) by Emperor Huizong of the Song dynasty to systematically integrate and administer court music. Its primary functions included the performance of Yayue and Guchui music, while it also carried out a wide range of responsibilities, including the composition of musical pieces, the manufacture of instruments, the collection and compilation of musical works, and the training of musicians.[36] The Dashengfu was abolished in the seventh year of the Xuanhe era (1125), only two decades after its establishment. The institution maintained a close association with Dasheng Yayue, which was subsequently transmitted to Goryeo. Based on its functions, it can be inferred that the Dashengfu was primarily responsible for the performance of Yayue and Guchui music, and that it likely did not include Yeoak. This reveals a structural context similar to that of Goryeo, where, after the establishment of the Aakseo, the performance of Aak was transferred to a separate institution, thereby excluding Yeoak from that sphere.

The foregoing discussion has examined the musical institutions of the Song dynasty. Based on the nature of their repertoires and the methods of musician recruitment, female performers are not attested in institutions such as the Dayueju, Guchuiju, Dashengfu, Junrongzhi, and Yunshaobu. While Yeoak are documented in the Jiaofang and the Xianshaoyuan, the performances in the latter were confined to the imperial household and were not publicly accessible, resulting in a scarcity of extant sources. Due to these documentary limitations, the present study necessarily focuses its discussion of Song

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[34] Zhang, Zhao. "The Dissemination and Influence of Song Dynasty Court Music." Master's thesis, Hebei University, 2012, 19.

[35] Chen, Yang (Song Dynasty). *Yueshu (Treatise on Music)*. In *Photographic Reprint of the Wenyuange Edition of the Siku Quanshu*. Taipei: Commercial Press, 1986, vol. 211, 839.

[36] Wei, Yahao. "A Study of the Yuefu Institution in the Song Dynasty." PhD diss., Capital Normal University, 2007, 169–170.

dynasty Yeoak primarily on the Jiaofang. At the same time, this fact shows that, although Song musical institutions were more diversified than those of Goryeo, the institutional affiliations available to Yeoak were in fact more restricted. This stands in clear contrast to Goryeo, where Yeoak were administered through multiple institutions, including the Daeakseo, Gwanhyeonbang, and Jiaofang. In particular, the fact that institutions responsible for formal state ritual and military music—such as the Dayueju, Guchuiju, Junrongzhi, Yunshaobu, and Dashengfu—were staffed exclusively by male musicians suggests that the central sphere of state ritual was structurally organized according to a male-centered gender order. This institutional arrangement should not be understood merely as an administrative division. Rather, it should be understood as the result of state power reproducing gender order by linking musical genre and ritual hierarchy to gender, thereby confining women's roles to specific domains. Within this structure, Yeoak were confined to comparatively peripheral spheres, such as court banquets and entertainment-oriented performances, and were thereby institutionally assigned only specific gendered roles within the order constructed by state power. Furthermore, this shows that Yeoak occupied a dual position: they were mobilized as central performers within the sphere of performance, while remaining marginalized at the institutional and social levels. It also confirms that the disparity between the artistic capacities of Yeoak and their social status was structurally reproduced in both societies. Ultimately, both Goryeo and Song maintained an institutional demand for Yeoak within the state ritual system, while also fixing them in socially marginal positions; in this respect, the two societies shared a comparable dual structure.

As discussed above, the musical institutions of Goryeo and Song have been examined respectively. A point of commonality can be identified in that, in both societies, the Jiaofang functioned as the central institution for the activities of Yeoak. However, in the case of Goryeo, in addition to the Jiaofang, the Daeakseo and Gwanhyeonbang each fulfilled distinct musical functions, thereby diversifying the spheres of Yeoak activity. By contrast, although Yeoak activity in the Song dynasty can also be identified within the Xianshaoyuan, the scarcity of related sources, stemming from its closed and exclusively imperial character, suggests that the Jiaofang effectively functioned as the primary institution for Yeoak activities. In this regard, while Yeoak in Goryeo were dispersed and operated across multiple institutions, those in the Song dynasty were managed in a more centralized manner, with the Jiaofang serving as the institutional core. This difference reveals a divergence in the institutional modes of operation between the two societies. Despite these differences, the two societies shared a common structural logic: both incorporated Yeoak into official institutions as performers of state rituals and court banquets, while simultaneously relegating

them to socially marginal positions through restrictions of status and gender. Furthermore, the gendered roles fulfilled by Yeoak within state ritual systems, along with the forms of social marginalization they experienced, can be understood in part by examining the nature and structure of the musical institutions to which they were affiliated. On this basis, the following section will examine in detail the performance practices of Yeoak affiliated with each institution.

3. *The Characteristics of Yeoak in Goryeo and the Song Dynasty*

Based on the preceding examination of the musical institutions of Goryeo and the Song dynasty, it is evident that Yeoak in Goryeo were affiliated with the Daeakseo, the Gwanhyeonbang, and the Jiaofang, whereas in the Song dynasty they were associated primarily with the Jiaofang and the Xianshaoyuan. In this context, it is necessary to investigate the types of performances these Yeoak executed and the patterns of their activities. Accordingly, this chapter proceeds to analyze the characteristics and performance practices of Yeoak in Goryeo and the Song dynasty.

3.1 The Activities of Yeoak in the Goryeo Dynasty

3.1.1 Performance Repertoire and Forms

Yeoak in the Goryeo dynasty were responsible for performing in various forms across a range of state rituals and court banquets. Records related to Yeoak in the Goryeo dynasty can be confirmed through historical sources such as the *Goryeosa* and *Goryeodogyeong*. The activities of Yeoak are attested in various state-sponsored Buddhist ceremonies, including the Palgwanhoe and Yeondeunghoe, as well as in court banquets and other official gatherings. According to *Goryeosa*, Vol. 71, during the reign of King Munjong, Yeoak affiliated with the Jiaofang, including Jingyeong and Choyeong, performed musical pieces such as Pogurak, Gujanggibyeolgi, and Wangmodaegamu during the Yeondeunghoe and Palgwanhoe. A more detailed account records that "In the 27th year of King Munjong's reign (1073), in February, thirteen Yeoak of the Jiaofang, including Jingyeong, petitioned to perform the Dapsahaenggamu they had rehearsed during the Yeondeunghoe, and the king granted permission. Later that year, in November, the Palgwanhoe was held, during which the king visited Sinbongnu to observe musical and dance performances. At this event, Choyeong, a Yeoak of the Jiaofang, performed the newly imported Pogurak and Gujanggibyeolgi. In the 31st year of King Munjong's reign (1077), in February during the Yeondeunghoe, the king attended Junggwangjeon to observe performances, during which Choyeong performed

the Wangmodaegamu. This dance troupe comprised fifty-five performers per unit and formed four-character phrases through choreography, representing either 'Long Live the King' or 'Peace and Prosperity under Heaven'."[37]

Although Goryeo ultimately achieved victory in the protracted war with the Khitan, which lasted over twenty years, it subsequently entered into a subordinate relationship with the Khitan, resulting in a suspension of diplomatic relations with the Song dynasty. It was not until the reign of King Munjong that diplomatic exchanges with the Song were resumed, leading to a significant influx of Song music into Goryeo.[38] Against this historical backdrop, in the 27th year of King Munjong's reign (1073), the Dapsahaenggamu was performed at the Yeondeunghoe, while newly imported musical and dance pieces from the Song dynasty, including Pogurak and Gujanggibyeolgi, were presented at the Palgwanhoe. Furthermore, in the 31st year of King Munjong's reign (1077), the Wangmodaegamu, performed by a troupe of fifty-five dancers, was staged at the Yeondeunghoe. In Goryeo, Pogurak, Gujanggibyeolgi, and Wangmodaegamu were classified as Dangak, which was broadly understood as a general term for music imported from China. Dangak can be further divided into two categories: Dangak jeongjae and Sayak. Dangak jeongjae corresponds to the Daqu of China and falls within the broader category of banquet music. The Pogurak, Gujanggibyeolgi, and Wangmodaegamu performed by Yeoak of the Jiaofang exemplify the Dangak jeongjae form.

The performance of Dangak jeongjae was not limited to Buddhist ceremonies such as the Palgwanhoe and Yeondeunghoe, but also frequently occurred on occasions such as the king's birthday and banquets attended by the monarch and his officials. Furthermore, Dangak jeongjae in the Goryeo dynasty required a large number of performers, and its performance format was comparatively grand and elaborate, indicating that it was primarily intended for audiences within the royal court and the aristocracy.

In addition to performing Dangak jeongjae and other Dangak pieces, Yeoak in Goryeo also performed Hyangak, indigenous Korean music. Although the introduction of Dangak jeongjae into Goryeo led to increased demand for its performance at court, the relatively small number of Dangak jeongjae recorded in *Goryeosa*, Vol. 71—only five pieces—indicates that the repertoire imported from China was limited. To reconcile this imbalance between growing demand and the scarcity of Dangak jeongjae, Goryeo developed Hyangak jeongjae, a

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[37] *Goryeosa*, vol. 71, Yeok 2, section Yong Sogak Jeoldo.

[38] Piao, Enyu. *Goryeo Dangak (Tang Music of the Goryeo Dynasty)*. Seoul: Munsacheol, 2010, 14–25.

genre of musical-dance compositions modeled on the Dangak jeongjae framework. Contemporary records suggest that three Hyangak jeongjae were created during this period: Mugo, Tongdong, and Muae. Hyangak jeongjae was a newly created performance form modeled on the structure of Dangak jeongjae and was performed using indigenous Goryeo music. The term Hyangak jeongjae was employed to distinguish these compositions from Dangak jeongjae imported from the Song dynasty. Although Hyangak jeongjae followed the formal patterns of Dangak, its melodies were drawn from Hyangak, and the lyrics were rendered in Korean, reflecting its classification within the native Hyangak repertoire.

Furthermore, the fact that Yeoak performed Gayo—lyric poetry orally transmitted in the Goryeo dynasty in a manner similar to folk songs—is attested in *Goryeosa*, Vol. 29.[39] In response to shortages of Yeoak in the Daeakseo and Gwanhyeonbang, women were selected from local Ginyeo who demonstrated exceptional beauty and musical skill to supplement the ranks. A portion of these recruits was organized into a separate unit known as the Namjangbyeoldae, in which female musicians performed in male attire, and were instructed in Goryeo gayo repertoire, including pieces such as those performed at Sanghwajeom.[40]

Based on the available records concerning Yeoak, the high frequency of Dangak and Hyangak in their performances indicates that these musical forms occupied a significant proportion of Yeoak's repertoire and performance formats. Music in the Goryeo dynasty is generally categorized into three main categories: Aak, Dangak, and Hyangak. Since Aak was performed exclusively by male musicians, it is entirely plausible that the performance formats of Yeoak were predominantly focused on Dangak and Hyangak. This should not be understood merely as a division of musical forms, but as the result of institutional regulation of the gendered roles assigned to Yeoak within the state ritual system. In the Song dynasty as well, official ritual institutions such as the Dayueju and Guchuiju were composed exclusively of male musicians, while Yeoak were confined to the Jiaofang, which centered on banquet entertainment. Viewed comparatively, both societies institutionally demarcated gendered boundaries by excluding Yeoak from musical genres of higher ritual status, such as Aak and Guchui music. In other words, Yeoak were excluded from formal ritual

[39] *Goryeosa*, vol. 29, op. cit.

[40] Although the name Sanghwajeom does not appear in *Goryeosa*, the lyrics of the song correspond to Sanghwajeom, a Hyangak piece from the Goryeo period. Sanghwajeom represents a quintessential native Goryeo song, and the correspondence of the lyrics indicates that the songs performed by female musicians were also in the Hyangak style.

domains such as Aak and confined instead to specific performance spheres represented by Dangak and Hyangak, thereby occupying a marginal position within the state ritual order. Beyond these established forms, it cannot be ruled out that Yeoak may also have included Baixi, a diverse category of miscellaneous performances. *Goryeosa*, Vol. 18, records that when the king returned to the palace, the Gwanhyeonbang and Daeakseo performed Baixi to welcome the royal procession.[41] Although it cannot be determined with certainty whether Yeoak directly participated in these performances, the elaborate adornment with gold, silver, jewels, and silk suggests a high likelihood that Yeoak were also involved.

3.1.2 Performance Case: Dangak Jeongjae—Pogurak

To examine the specific performance content of Goryeo Yeoak, this study focuses on *Pogurak*, one of the *Dangak jeongjae* recorded in Volume 71 of the *Goryeosa*. *Goryeosa*, Vol. 71, provides detailed records of five types of Dangak Jeongjae, which allows for the reconstruction of performance practices of the period. Among these, Pogurak, which was performed at the Palgwanhoe in the 27th year of King Munjong's reign (1073), serves as a representative example. Accordingly, Pogurak is employed here as a case study to analyze the performance content of Yeoak. Moreover, the continued performance of Pogurak on contemporary Korean stages attests to its transmission over nearly a millennium and underscores its status as a significant component of Korea's traditional musical heritage. [42]

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[41] *Goryeosa*, vol. 18, Sega, section 19.

[42] Pogurak is documented in a wide range of historical sources, including the *Goryeosa* (History of Goryeo), the *Akhak Gwebeom* (Illustrated Canon of Court Music), the *Jeongjae Mudo Holgi* (Manual of Court Dance Performances), The *Veritable Records of the Joseon Dynasty*, and various uigwe (Royal Protocols). These records provide detailed information on the performance practices of Pogurak from the Goryeo through the Joseon dynasty and demonstrate that it was one of the representative repertoires continuously performed at royal court banquets. In addition, Pogurak was performed at the banquet celebrating the fiftieth birthday of Emperor Gojong in 1901. The version of Pogurak currently performed by the National Gugak Center has been transmitted through the Yiwangjik Aakbu (Royal Aak Department of the Yi Royal Household) during the Japanese colonial period (1910–1945), which inherited the traditions of the Joseon court music institution. Given its long history of transmission, Pogurak has received considerable scholarly attention, with more than one hundred studies, including doctoral dissertations, having been published on the subject. (Kim, Jukeop. "The Understanding of the Play-Cultural Value of *Pogurak* through Comparative Analysis of Its Substance." PhD diss., Sejong University, 2009, 8–52.)

Based on the account of Pogurak in *Goryeosa*, Vol. 71, the following summary can be made; its performance procedures and content may be systematically organized as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Pogurak in the *Goryeosa*.

Sequence	Musical Piece	Procedure and Structure
Introduction	Jeolhwaryeong	1. The Jukganja are responsible for reciting the Guho (opening oral commands) and the Chieo (congratulatory addresses). 2. Twelve gisaeng sing the Samdaesi in accordance with the melody of Jeolhwaryeong. 3. Perform the Jeolhwa Dance.
Main Section	Suryong-eumryeong Sopo-gurak-akryeong	1. Sing the Dongcheongyeongsa to the melody of Suryong-eumryeong. 2. Six performers of the left unit alternately face front and back while dancing. Sing the Yanghaenghwagyusa to the melody of Sopo-gurak-akryeong. The unit leader steps forward to the ball gate to sing and perform the ball-throwing game. 3. Six performers of the right unit alternately face front and back while dancing. Sing the Sopo-guraksa. The unit leader steps forward to the ball gate to sing and perform the ball-throwing game. 4. In the order left 2, right 2, left 3, right 3, the left 6 and right 6 performers all perform the ball-throwing.
Conclusion	Cheongpyeongryeong Sopo-gurakryeong	1. Perform the Paja Dance. 2. The Jukganja recites the Guho and the Chieo, then exits.

The Pogurak recorded in the *Goryeosa* represents a comprehensive performance format encompassing singing, dance, and musical accompaniment. As indicated by the performance sequence, Pogurak incorporated a variety of musical pieces, including Jeolhwaryeong, Suryongeum, Sopogurakryeong, Cheongpyeongryeong, and Cheongpyeongak. The ensemble for Pogurak consisted of two Jukganja, twelve dancers, and court musicians, with the roles of both the Jukganja and the dancers performed by female musicians (Yeoak). Furthermore, historical records confirm that these female performers were responsible not only for the Chieo and Guho, but also for the singing and dance components of the performance.

Pogurak can be subdivided into an introductory section, a central section, and a concluding section, based on the fixed sequence of musical pieces and the formation changes. In the introductory section, the Jukganja and Yeoak signaled

the commencement of the performance through Guho and singing, expressing the ritual intent to entertain and gratify the audience with music and dance. This suggests that Yeoak functioned not merely as executants of song and dance, but also as mediators who verbally conveyed the meaning and significance of the performance. In the central section, twelve Yeoak formed a line to perform group dances (gunmu) and singing, achieving collective aesthetic harmony through formation changes and rotational movements. Simultaneously, the twelve Yeoak performed singing and acrobatic skills in sequence, further enhancing the entertainment value and excitement of the performance. The procedural allocation of rewards and punishments based on the success of these performances indicates the incorporation of performative and playful elements. Moreover, during the process of throwing the ball into the Gumun, the music of Sopogurakryeong was performed repeatedly—over ten times— with variations only in the lyrics, which appears intended to help performers maintain focus on the game. The concluding section corresponded with the introductory section, in which the Jukganja again vocalized Chieo and Guho to signify the end of the performance.

Through Pogurak performances, Yeoak assumed multifaceted roles as dancers, vocalists, and agents of ritual communication, thereby occupying a central position within Dangak performance practices. The frequent documentation of Dangak in royal banquets during the Goryeo period suggests a substantial demand for this genre, particularly for Dangak Jeongjae, which can be considered the essence of Dangak. Such high demand appears to have also stimulated the creation of Hyangak Jeongjae. Given that both Dangak Jeongjae and Hyangak Jeongjae in the Goryeo period predominantly featured Yeoak, their importance and centrality within the system of court banquet music can be clearly established. Yet this central role paradoxically coexisted with the social marginalization of Yeoak. The fact that both Dangak Jeongjae and Hyangak Jeongjae were organized primarily around Yeoak suggests that these women were institutionally bound to repeatedly perform only a limited set of gendered performance roles within the order defined by state power. This pattern corresponds structurally to the Song case, where the Jiaofang served as the principal institutional setting in which Yeoak performed Daqu, Duiwu (troupe dances), and related performance forms. Thus, despite differences in musical form, Yeoak in both societies shared a common structural condition marked by institutional incorporation and social marginalization.

3.1.3 Social Rank and Status in Society

Although Yeoak made considerable contributions to musical activities during the Goryeo period, they were selected from the lowest social strata and

were consequently relegated to the lowest position within the feudal social hierarchy. The origins of Yeoak are documented in both the *Goryeosa* and the *Goryeodo-gyeong*. According to the *Goryeosa*, Vol. 38, due to a shortage of Yeoak in the Daeakseo and the Gwanhyeonbang, individuals with exceptional beauty and talent were selected from among gisaeng, and mudang and gwanbi who were skilled in singing and dancing were also chosen.[43] Similarly, Vol. 29 records that local gisaeng were selected to supplement the Jiaofang.[44] Thus, it can be observed that, in order to supplement the Yeoak of the Daeakseo, Gwanhyeonbang, and Jiaofang, individuals who were selected from among gisaeng, mudang, and gwanbi were those with exceptional appearance and skills in singing and dancing. During the Goryeo period, social hierarchy was broadly divided into yangin(free persons) and low-born, which were further subdivided into four strata: the aristocracy, the middle class including hyangri and seori, commoners, and low-born.[45] The gisaeng, mudang, and gwanbi selected as Yeoak are understood to have all belonged to the lowest social stratum, the low-born class.

In the *Goryeodogyeong*, compiled in 1123 by the Song envoy Xu Jing, the Yeoak of Goryeo are referred to as lower music and are classified into three grades. According to the record, the number of Yeoak affiliated with the Daeakseo and Gwanhyeonbang exceeded 400[46], indicating a considerable scale. Furthermore, the designation of Yeoak as lower music suggests that their social status was extremely low.

The social status of Yeoak can also be inferred to some extent from records concerning court musicians. *Goryeosa*, Vol. 75, records that among court musicians, those who had three or four sons were required to have at least one son engage in music, while the others were assigned to duties such as preparing meals within the palace or undertaking miscellaneous tasks. Furthermore, in the 18th year of King Injong's reign (1140), a royal decree stipulated that even if the sons of court musicians rendered meritorious service, they were to be rewarded only with material goods and were prohibited from appointment to

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[43] *Goryeosa*, vol. 38.

[44] *Goryeosa*, vol. 29, op. cit.

[45] Kwon, Dukyu. "Social Stratification in the Koryo Period." *Andong Sahak* 2 (1996): 71–87.

[46] Previous studies have shown that the Gyeongsiseo was not an institution overseeing music, but rather an office responsible for inspecting the marketplace and stabilizing prices. For this reason, the number of female musicians associated with the Gyeongsiseo was excluded.

official posts.[47] This indicates not only that the descendants of court musicians were institutionally deprived of eligibility to sit for the civil service examinations, but also that, beginning in the reign of King Injong, their opportunities to advance into officialdom were fundamentally blocked. Within such a social context, it becomes evident that the status of Yeoak—who occupied an even lower position than male musicians—was correspondingly more precarious and disadvantaged. Thus, while Yeoak in the Goryeo dynasty were institutionally incorporated into the state ritual system to perform specific gendered roles, their social origins were largely confined to the low-born strata, and their avenues for upward mobility were systematically blocked. Viewed through the theoretical lenses of gender performativity and marginalization, this reveals a dual structure in which institutional incorporation paradoxically served to deepen their social marginalization.

3.2 The Activities of Yeoak in the Song Dynasty

3.2.1 Performance Repertoire and Forms

Yeoak in the Song dynasty, centered on the Jiaofang, were responsible for performing various forms, including *Daqu*, and their specific composition and performance content can be identified through the Female Disciples' Troupe. Having examined the musical institutions of the Song dynasty in the preceding discussion, it has been confirmed that Yeoak in the Song dynasty were primarily active within the Jiaofang and the Xianshaoyuan. However, references to Yeoak in the *Songshi* are extremely limited, appearing only six times in total. These references are distributed as follows: twice in Vol. 5, "Taizong"; once in Vol. 32, "Gaozong 9"; once in Vol. 142, "Yue 17" ; once in Vol. 455, "Ma Shen"; and once in Vol. 480, "Wuyue Qian Shi". Despite their occurrence, these references provide little concrete information regarding the performance activities of Yeoak. Accordingly, in examining the performance content and form of Yeoak in the Song dynasty, the present study focuses primarily on the Jiaofang as the principal subject of analysis.[48]

According to Vol. 142 of the *Songshi*, the formation process of the Jiaofang, along with its institutional organization, personnel composition, and specific performance activities are described in considerable details. In addition, in

[47] *Goryeosa*, vol. 75.

[48] The rationale for focusing on yeoak within the Jiaofang has already been discussed in the preceding section.

introducing the system of group dances, the text provides detailed explanations of the performance content and costumes of both the "Xiao'er dui" (Children's Troupe) and the Female Disciples' Troupe. The latter comprised a total of 153 performers, significantly exceeding the 72 members of the former. Furthermore, Vol. 185 of the *Yueshu* by Chen Yang (1061–1128) records the composition of Yeoak affiliated with the Jiaofang. Among the 153 performers, 64 were female dance performers, 4 served as lead dancers, 40 held floral props, 4 were young girls, 40 were attendant performers, and 1 served as a narrator.[49] This personnel structure demonstrates that dance constituted a highly significant component of Yeoak performance. This corresponds to the fact that Goryeo Dangak jeongjae likewise adopted large-scale performance formats involving numerous dancers, showing that in both societies Yeoak performances centered on dance and occupied a core place in state banquets.

According to the *Songshi*, the Female Disciples' Troupe was further subdivided into ten separate teams. These consisted of the Pusaman dui, Ganhuayue dui, Paoqiule dui[50], Jiarenjianmudan dui, Funishang dui, Cailian dui, Fengyingyue dui, Pusaxianxianghua dui, Caiyunxian dui, and Daqiuyue dui. Among these, the Paoqiule dui, which bears the same name as the Dangak jeongjae Pogurak of Goryeo, can also be identified. An examination of the costume of the Paoqiule dui shows that the performers wore wide-sleeved upper garments made of embroidered silk in four colors, fastened at the waist with a silver belt, and held embroidered balls (xiuqiu) in their hands. This stands in marked contrast to the Pogurak described in the *Goryeosa*, where only a brief record notes that the Yeoak who performed the dance wore red makeup. Furthermore, the fact that the Goryeo Pogurak was composed of twelve performers provides a useful basis for estimating the number of participants in the Paoqiule dui of the Female Disciples' Troupe.

An examination of the names of the Children's Troupe and the Female Disciples' Troupe recorded in the *Songshi* reveals that they were composed of units such as Tuozhi dui, Jianqi dui, Pusaman dui, and Jiarenjianmudan dui. The correspondence between these designations and the titles of Daqu suggests that Daqu constituted a substantial portion of the repertoire performed by both

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[49] Chen, Yang (Song Dynasty). *Yueshu (Treatise on Music)*, vol. 185, "Female Music II.", In *Wenyuange Edition of the Siku Quanshu*. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Publishing House, 6th ed., 1987, 830–831.

[50] The Chinese characters are used consistently, and while Paoqiule represents the Chinese pronunciation and Pogurak the Korean pronunciation, both refer to the same musical form despite the difference in pronunciation.

troupes. Furthermore, according to the account of the "Chunqiu Shengjie San Dayan" in the *Songshi*, the banquet consisted of a total of nineteen procedural stages, with the Children's Troupe and the Female Disciples' Troupe performing in the ninth and fourteenth stages, respectively. Regarding the Children's Troupe, the *Songshi* records: "The Children's Troupe performs dances and also delivers congratulatory addresses praising his character and virtues." Concerning the Female Disciples' Troupe, it similarly states: "The Female Disciples' Troupe performs dances and likewise delivers addresses as does the Children's Troupe." From these records, it can be confirmed that both the Children's Troupe and the Female Disciples' Troupe presented performances consisting of laudatory speeches accompanied by dance. The fact that performances by the Female Disciples' Troupe were fixed at specific points in the banquet sequence demonstrates that the performative acts of Yeoak were institutionally regulated so that they repeatedly enacted gendered roles within the framework of state ritual. This was structurally similar to the way Goryeo Yeoak performed Dangak jeongjae within the prescribed procedures of state ceremonies such as the Palgwanhoe and Yeondeunghoe.

The activities of Yeoak in the Song dynasty are attested not only in the musical form known as Daqu but also in performances of Baixi. In Vol. 147 of the *Wenxian Tongkao*, in its discussion of Song-period Baixi, the term nüji Baixi—that is, Baixi performed by female performers—appears. These performers were affiliated with the Left and Right Armies and were mobilized according to official registers whenever large-scale banquets were held. Although it is difficult to ascertain the specific performance items presented by Yeoak, the source nevertheless confirms that they participated in Baixi performances. In this way, Yeoak in the Song dynasty were institutionally organized as performers who carried out dances and ceremonial recitations within the ritual procedures of state banquets; their performances repeatedly enacted gendered roles prescribed by state authority. In the case of nüji Baixi, however, the fact that performers were summoned only when needed, according to official registers, reveals a dual structure: Yeoak were incorporated into institutional systems while remaining socially marginal. This contrasts with Goryeo, where Yeoak were continuously affiliated with and active across multiple institutions, and shows that the institutional organization of Yeoak in the Song dynasty was comparatively more restricted.

3.2.2 Performance Case: Daqu Cailian Wu

The specific performance content and format of Song dynasty Yeoak can be examined through the *Cailianwu*, as recorded in the *Mufeng Zhenyin*

Manlu, compiled by Shi Hao (1106–1194) of the Song dynasty. Vol. 45 and Vol. 46 of the *Mufeng Zhenyin Manlu* contain a total of seven Daqu, among which the second is the Cailian Wu (Lotus-Picking Dance). The Cailian Wu is presumed to have been performed by the Cailian Troupe within the Female Disciples' Troupe. Based on the descriptions provided in the *Mufeng Zhenyin Manlu*, its performance procedure may be systematically organized as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 The Cailian Wu in *Mufeng Zhenyin Manlu***.**

Sequence	Musical Piece	Procedure and Structure
Introduction	Shuangtoulianling	The Jukganja recites the gounian, performs the ShuangtouLianling, and executes the Wufang Dance.
	Cailianling	The Jukganja recites the gounian, sings the Cailianling, performs the Cailianling, and executes the Wufang Dance.
	Cailianqupo	The Jukganja performs the Huaxin Dialogue, plays the Cailian Qupo, and executes the Rupo Dance.
		The Jukganja recites, and the Huaxin recites poetry.
Main Section	Yujia'ao	1. The Yujia'ao is performed, during which the Huaxin sings and dances. This is followed by a performance to the accompaniment of the Yujia'ao, in which five performers dance while changing their positions.
		2. The Yujia'ao is performed, during which the Huaxin sings and dances. This is followed by another performance to the accompaniment of the Yujia'ao, in which five performers dance while changing their positions and reciting poetry.
		3. The procedure is the same as in Section 2.
		4. The procedure is the same as in Section 2.
		5. The piece Yujia'ao is performed, during which the Huaxin sings while dancing. Subsequently, five performers dance to the accompaniment of Yujia'ao while changing their positions.
Conclusion	Huatangchun	1. The Jukganja recites the gounian.
	Hechuan	2. All performers sing Huatangchun, perform the instrumental
	Shuangtoubo	rendition of Huatangchun, and execute the accompanying dance.
		3. They sing the Hechuan, perform it instrumentally, and dance collectively.
		4. The Jukganja recites the Qiandui.
		5. The Shuangtoubo is performed, while five performers dance and exit.

The performance of Cailian Wu in *Mufeng Zhenyin Manlu* comprised a Jukganja responsible for directing the proceedings, five yeoak performing dance, singing, and occasional poetry recitation, and a trailing ensemble providing musical accompaniment. A total of seven musical pieces were performed, namely ShuangtouLianling, CailianLing, CailianQupo, Yujia'ao,

HuatangChun, Hechuan, and Shuangtoubo, among which Yujia'ao was the most significant, being repeated ten times. The five performers alternated positions, performing both dance and song, and occasionally reciting poetry. This arrangement indicates that the yeoak primarily undertook singing and dancing, while intermittently assuming the role of poetry recitation. Through the performance procedures of Cailian Wu, it is evident that the yeoak took primary responsibility for the singing and dancing of the Daqu, thereby leading the performance, with song and dance forming the core elements of the Cailian Wu Daqu. The central role of the yeoak in the Daqu provides a clear rationale for naming the ensemble the Female Disciples' Troupe. Furthermore, the performance content and procedures directed by the Jukganja are consistently observed in other Daqu recorded in *Mufeng Zhenyin Manlu*, suggesting that the Jukganja's performance had already been standardized. This standardization can be understood as a mechanism to ensure both the integrity of the Daqu and the smooth execution of the performance, particularly given that Tang dynasty Daqu were extremely extensive and only portions of them were performed during the Song dynasty.

The fact that Yeoak in Daqu performances thus assumed multiple roles encompassing singing, dancing, and poetry recitation suggests that particular gendered performance functions were repeatedly imposed upon them within the order defined by state power. This pattern corresponds structurally to the way the performance roles of Yeoak in the Goryeo dynasty became institutionally fixed around Dangak Jeongjae and Hyangak Jeongjae, thereby reaffirming the shared dual status of Yeoak in the two societies.

3.2.3 Social Rank and Status in Society

Although Yeoak in the Song dynasty were responsible for performances in major court banquets, they occupied a lower social position than male musicians, owing both to negative perceptions of performance forms such as Daqu and the constraints of their social status. During the Song dynasty, yeoak performed at major banquets and events such as Chunqiu Shengjie San Dayan and Shangyuan Guandeng, thereby contributing significantly to the conduct of court ceremonies. In addition, the Song Jiaofang system classified musicians into three ranks, prescribing robes with wide sleeves in purple, crimson, and green according to rank.[51] It is therefore probable that the yeoak affiliated with

[51] Tuotuo (Yuan Dynasty) et al. *Song Shi (History of the Song Dynasty)*. Vol. 142. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1977, 3358.

the Jiaofang also wore robes of different colors in accordance with this hierarchical structure.

An examination of the "Nuyue Xia" section in Vol. 185 of the *Yue Shu* reveals that yeoak frequently performed the dances of the Daqu. However, the text characterizes the Daqu as a peculiar and playful spectacle, associating it with the Zheng-Wei musical tradition and describing it as a repertoire professionally cultivated by low-ranking musicians.[52] In other words, the performance content of the yeoak was regarded as a peculiar, playful spectacle akin to the Daqu, and thus considered dispensable. This suggests a low evaluation of the status of the yeoak, who were responsible for the singing and dancing of the Daqu. Such an attitude is further reflected in the case of a banquet held for Khitan envoys at the ChongdeDian, where only the Children's Troupe performed, instead of the Female Disciples' Troupe.[53] The prohibition against the use of yeoak is also documented in Vol. 113[54] of the *Song Shi* and Vol. 31[55] of the *Song Shi Xinbian*. According to Vol. 113 of the *Song Shi*, court officials submitted a memorial in the ninth year of the Yuanfeng era proposing that the Yeoak attached to the Imperial Guards and Regional Army no longer be employed at grand banquets and that the dances of the Children's Troupe be used instead. The source further notes that Wang Gongchen (1012–1085) recommended that young girls be used in their place.[56] Although the Yeoak mentioned here were not affiliated with the Jiaofang but instead belonged to the Imperial Guards and Regional Army, they were nonetheless clearly identifiable as female musical performers. In Vol. 31 of the *Song Shi Xinbian*, a memorial submitted in the seventh year of the Zhenghe era (1117) by Yiliju addresses perceived problems in music. The memorial asserts that yeoak should not be employed, that this prohibition should be communicated to descendants, and that it must be observed in accordance with family regulations. These records collectively indicate the existence of a negative perception toward yeoak and their performances during this period.

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[52] Chen, Yang (Song Dynasty). *Yueshu (Treatise on Music)*. Vol. 185, op. cit., 830–831.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Tuotuo (Yuan Dynasty) et al. *Song Shi (History of the Song Dynasty)*. Vol. 113. op. cit., 2687.

[55] Ke, Weiqi (Ming Dynasty). *Song Shi Xin Bian (A New Compilation of the History of the Song Dynasty)*. Vol. 31. Woodblock Print Edition, 21.

[56] Xu, Song (Qing Dynasty), ed. *Song Huiyao Jigao (Draft Recovered from the Collected Statutes of the Song Dynasty)*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1st ed., 1957, 1454–1455.

Clear documentation regarding the social status of yeoak is difficult to find in historical sources. According to the research of Jiabei Li, the origins of Song yeoak can generally be categorized into three groups: first, descendants of musicians registered in the musical household; second, individuals who became yeoak due to the confiscation of property as a result of crimes; and third, those who became yeoak as a consequence of sale or seizure. Among these groups, descendants of musicians constituted the largest proportion of yeoak members.[57]

Vol. 142 of the *Song Shi* and the *Song Huiyao* further record that, according to court regulations, musicians of the Jiaofang could be appointed to low-ranking official positions after serving for a certain period.[58] In other words, it was permitted that after serving in the Jiaofang for twenty years and reaching the age of fifty, musicians were eligible for appointment to positions such as Miaoling or Zhenjiang.[59] In the Tang dynasty, musicians were considered low-born, and it was extremely rare for them to attain official positions. In contrast, during the Song dynasty, appointments of Jiaofang musicians to official posts were possible, indicating that Jiaofang musicians were no longer regarded as low-born. Nevertheless, owing to the professional nature of their involvement in the performing arts, Jiaofang musicians continued to face social discrimination, and even when appointments were granted, these were limited to very low-ranking positions.[60] In contrast to male musicians, yeoak were entirely excluded from the possibility of official appointment and, because they primarily performed in Daqu and other large-scale musical forms, were frequently perceived as low-born performers. This indicates that the social status of yeoak was lower than that of male musicians and suggests that such perceptions may have been one of the underlying reasons for proposals to prohibit their use. Ultimately, although Yeoak in the Song dynasty were institutionally organized to fulfill gendered roles within the state ritual system, they were fundamentally excluded from the possibility of official appointment, and even the performance

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[57] Li, Jiabei. "An Exploration of Female Music under the Music-Registry System of the Two Song Dynasties." op. cit., 13–14.

[58] Tuotuo (Yuan Dynasty) et al. *Song Shi (History of the Song Dynasty)*. Vol. 142. op. cit., 3358. Li, Tao (Song Dynasty). *Song Huiyao Jigao (Draft Recovered from the Collected Statutes of the Song Dynasty)*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1957, 274.

[59] Wei, Yahao. "A Study of the Yuefu Institution in the Song Dynasty." PhD diss., Capital Normal University, 2007, 62.

[60] Wei, Yahao. "A Study of the Yuefu Institution in the Song Dynasty." op. cit., 62. Xu, Lujie. "A Study of Court Music Officials in the Song Dynasty." Master's thesis, Xi'an Conservatory of Music, 2022, 70.

forms with which they were associated were negatively evaluated, leaving them entrenched in socially marginal positions. This demonstrates a dual structure in which institutional incorporation paradoxically deepened the social marginalization of Yeoak. In this respect, Yeoak in the Song dynasty shared a structural affinity with their Goryeo counterparts, who were likewise marginalized through the status constraints attached to low-born origins.

3.3 Patterns of Yeoak in Goryeo and Song

While Yeoak in the Goryeo and Song dynasties shared similar performance forms, they exhibited distinct differences in terms of institutional affiliation, performance content, and social background. Based on the foregoing discussion, the patterns of Yeoak in the two countries can be summarized in Table 3.

Table 3 Comparison of Yeoak in Goryeo and Song

Category	Goryeo	Song
Affiliated Institution	Daeakseo Gwanhyeonbang Jiaofang	Jiaofang Xianshaoyuan
Performance Form	Dangak (Dangak Jeongjae, Saak) Hyangak (Hyangak Jeongjae, Gayo) Baixi	Banquet music (Daqu, etc.) Baixi
Social Rank and Status	Predominantly composed of low-born individuals Low social status	Predominantly composed of low-born and commoners Low social status

Based on the preceding table, although yeoak existed in both Goryeo and the Song dynasty during broadly comparable historical periods, they exhibit not only shared characteristics but also distinct features specific to each context.

First, although Jiaofang is identified as the musical institution for yeoak in both Goryeo and Song, the relative significance of institutions differs. In Goryeo, yeoak were affiliated with Daeakseo, Gwanhyeonbang, and Jiaofang, whereas in the Song dynasty they were associated with Jiaofang and Xianshaoyuan. During the Goryeo period, Jiaofang frequently performed in conjunction with Daeakseo and Gwanhyeonbang, with performances by yeoak jointly carried out by all three institutions. That is, Jiaofang did not occupy a leading position in the performances of Goryeo yeoak. By contrast, in the Song dynasty, Xianshaoyuan rarely engaged in external performances, so the majority of yeoak performances were conducted by Jiaofang. This indicates that Jiaofang held a dominant role in yeoak performances during the Song dynasty.

Second, the number of musical institutions to which yeoak were affiliated was greater in Goryeo than in Song dynasty. In Goryeo, yeoak were associated with three institutions—Daeakseo, Gwanhyeonbang, and Jiaofang—whereas in the Song, yeoak were affiliated with only two institutions, Jiaofang and Xianshaoyuan. However, in Goryeo these three institutions shared performance responsibilities, such that no single institution occupied a leading position. In contrast, Xianshaoyuan in the Song rarely engaged in external performances, meaning that yeoak performances were in practice almost entirely conducted by Jiaofang. Consequently, Jiaofang assumed a dominant role in yeoak performances during the Song dynasty. In other words, although Goryeo featured a greater number of affiliated institutions, the actual organization of performance in the Song was more centralized, with the Jiaofang occupying a more pivotal position.

Third, Goryeo yeoak performed three types of music—Dangak, Hyangak, and Baixi—whereas Song yeoak performed only two types, banquet music and Baixi. In Goryeo, Dangak was referred to as banquet music in China, suggesting that Dangak and Yanyue can be considered part of the same musical lineage. In addition, performances of Hyangak by Goryeo yeoak are also documented. As a category of indigenous music, Hyangak was conceptually distinguished from the foreign-derived Dangak. While it included courtly forms such as Hyangak Jeongjae, it likely also encompassed a broader range of musical practices with characteristics associated with folk traditions, such as Goryeo gayo. Taken together, these observations suggest that Goryeo not only actively adopted musical forms from China but also placed significant emphasis on the preservation and performance of indigenous musical traditions.

Fourth, yeoak in both Goryeo and Song shared the common characteristic of occupying a very low social status. In Goryeo, yeoak were selected from low-born groups such as gisaeng, shamans, and gwanbi, indicating that their social status was institutionally fixed within the low-born class. In the Song dynasty, the descendants of musicians registered in the musical household constituted the primary members of yeoak; in addition, some individuals became yeoak as a result of property confiscation due to criminal offenses, as well as through sale or seizure.

Meanwhile, Xianshaoyuan primarily comprised palace women affiliated with imperial concubines, representing a group of yeoak from respectable social status backgrounds. That is, Song yeoak were composed predominantly of individuals from low-born and commoner strata. Although male musicians in the Song dynasty could, under certain conditions, obtain appointment to minor official posts after long-term service, such opportunities were entirely unavailable to yeoak. Indeed, yeoak were sometimes regarded as even lower in status simply because they were responsible for performing Daqu and other large-scale musical forms. Consequently, in both Goryeo and the Song dynasty,

yeoak were situated at the lower end of the social hierarchy, with opportunities for upward mobility effectively constrained.

Furthermore, the social status of Yeoak in both societies becomes more evident when considered in relation to that of male musicians. In the case of Goryeo, even male musicians were institutionally barred from entering officialdom; thus, it follows that the treatment of Yeoak, who occupied an even lower status, was correspondingly more unfavorable. In the Song dynasty, while male musicians were provided with an institutional pathway to appointment to minor official posts after long-term service, no such possibility was granted to Yeoak. On the contrary, Yeoak were at times regarded as even more debased performers precisely because of their association with large-scale musical forms such as Daqu and other expansive performance genres. As a result, although Yeoak in both dynasties were similarly confined to a low social status with little opportunity for upward mobility, a subtle distinction can be observed. In Goryeo, both male musicians and Yeoak were prohibited from entering official ranks, whereas in the Song dynasty, limited opportunities for social advancement were available only to male musicians. This indicates that the status of Yeoak was not merely low in absolute terms, but was structurally more disadvantaged in relation to that of male musicians.

Moreover, Yeoak in both Goryeo and the Song dynasty can be understood as occupying a dual social position. In both societies, they were indispensable to court rituals and banquets, yet simultaneously subject to social discrimination and confined to low-status positions, revealing an inherent contradiction. In other words, although Yeoak were essential as performers of courtly arts, they were also perceived as objects of entertainment and treated as subordinate and auxiliary figures. This dual treatment was not merely a matter of social prejudice. Rather, it operated as a mechanism of structural marginalization by confining Yeoak to designated performance spheres and systematically obstructing avenues for social mobility. Such a condition clearly reveals the subordinate position of Yeoak within a traditional male-centered social structure governed by patriarchal norms and Confucian ideology. Ultimately, this dual perception of Yeoak was not a matter at the individual level, but rather the product of structural contradictions imposed upon women by a patriarchal social system and Confucian order.

4. *Conclusions*

This study focuses on yeoak in Goryeo and the Song dynasty, with the aim of identifying their patterns and distinctive characteristics in the two contexts. To this end, it first analyzed the organizational structures of musical

institutions in each society, identifying the institutions with which yeoak were affiliated and within which they actively performed. It then investigated the performance forms and repertory of yeoak, with particular attention to their repertoire and modes of performance. Finally, it examined the social status and rank of yeoak, assessing how they were perceived and positioned within contemporary society. Based on these analyses, the patterns of yeoak in Goryeo and the Song dynasty may be summarized as follows.

First, in both Goryeo and the Song dynasty, the Jiaofang functioned as the principal institution for yeoak activities. However, in Goryeo, performance responsibilities were shared with the Daeakseo and Gwanhyeonbang, whereas in the Song dynasty the Jiaofang was responsible for the majority of yeoak performances. Second, the number of musical institutions to which yeoak were affiliated was greater in Goryeo than in Song. Third, Goryeo yeoak performed Dangak, Hyangak, and Baixi, whereas Song yeoak performed only banquet music and Baixi. Fourth, although yeoak in both societies made significant contributions to court musical culture, they occupied a low social status, and institutional constraints effectively limited their opportunities for upward mobility. Furthermore, it can be observed that Yeoak in both societies shared a dual social status. That is, while they were indispensable to court rituals and banquets, they were simultaneously subjected to contradictory treatment, in which they were both utilized as essential performers and disparaged as objects of entertainment and subordinate figures. Such institutional incorporation thus operated as a structural mechanism that further deepened the social marginalization of Yeoak. This condition can be understood as the product of structural contradictions imposed upon Yeoak within a male-centered social order governed by patriarchal norms and Confucian ideology.

This study has the limitation that the existing historical sources are fragmentary, preventing a fully systematic examination of yeoak. In the case of Goryeo, records such as the *Goryeosa* and Goryeodogyeong are dispersed and sporadic, making it difficult to comprehensively reconstruct the performance content and social status of yeoak. Similarly, for the Song dynasty, relevant records preserved in the Song Shi are extremely limited, hindering a complete understanding of the overall patterns of yeoak. Due to these constraints of available sources, this study necessarily restricted its analysis to the scope of extant documentation. If further relevant materials are discovered and comparative studies with Yeoak traditions in other East Asian countries are conducted more actively, a deeper understanding of the historical status and social roles of female musicians in East Asia is expected to be achieved. In addition, if subsequent research is undertaken from a gender perspective to analyze the social structure of Yeoak, it would contribute to a more nuanced and comprehensive

elucidation of the subordinate position occupied by female artists in traditional societies and its historical significance.

Notes

Daqu: a comprehensive art form combining instrumental music, vocal music, and dance.

Namjangbyeoldae: A special troupe in which female musicians performed dressed in male attire.

Jukganja: In court dance performances, the jukganja held a bamboo staff and signaled the beginning and end of the performance, positioned at the very front and rear of the dance troupe. Their role included guiding the entrance and exit of dancers and providing explanations of the performance content, functioning in a manner analogous to that of a modern master of ceremonies (MC).

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Abstract

Questo studio presenta un'analisi comparativa dello Yeoak — termine che designa sia le musiciste dedite alla pratica musicale sia la musica da esse eseguita — nelle dinastie Goryeo e Song, concentrandosi su tre ambiti fondamentali: il sistema delle istituzioni musicali, le forme di esecuzione e i repertori, nonché lo status sociale. Lo studio esamina le istituzioni cui le Yeoak erano affiliate, i repertori da esse eseguiti e le relative modalità di esecuzione, oltre alla loro posizione sociale. I risultati mettono in luce sia analogie sia differenze tra i due contesti. In entrambe le dinastie, il Jiaofang — istituzione musicale ufficiale responsabile della musica di corte, del canto e della danza e attiva soprattutto nei banchetti di corte e nelle diverse cerimonie di Stato — costituiva la principale istituzione di riferimento per le Yeoak. Tuttavia, nella dinastia Goryeo le responsabilità relative alle esibizioni erano condivise con il Daeakseo e il Gwanhyeonbang, mentre nella dinastia Song la maggior parte delle esibizioni era affidata al Jiaofang. Inoltre, l'insieme delle istituzioni cui le Yeoak erano affiliate era più ampio nella dinastia Goryeo. Per quanto riguarda il repertorio, le Yeoak di Goryeo eseguivano Dangak, Hyangak e Baixi, mentre le loro omologhe della dinastia Song eseguivano musica da banchetto e Baixi. Nonostante il significativo contributo apportato alla cultura musicale di corte, le Yeoak di entrambe le dinastie occupavano una posizione sociale relativamente bassa e disponevano di limitate possibilità di mobilità sociale.

PAROLE CHIAVE

Yeoak
Goryeo
Dinastia Song
Jiaofang
Forme di esecuzione
Status sociale

Abstract

This study presents a comparative analysis of Yeoak (female musicians engaged in musical activities and the music performed by them) in the Goryeo and Song dynasties, focusing on three key dimensions: musical institutional systems, performance forms and repertories, and social status. It investigates the organizations to which Yeoak belonged and analyzes their repertoires and modes of performance,

while also exploring their social standing. The findings reveal both similarities and differences between the two contexts. In both dynasties, the Jiaofang (an official music institution responsible for court music and song-and-dance in the Goryeo and Song dynasties, which primarily performed at court banquets and various state rituals) served as the principal institution for Yeoak. However, in Goryeo, performance responsibilities were shared with the Daeakseo and the Gwanhyeonbang, whereas in the Song dynasty the Jiaofang oversaw most performances. The range of institutions affiliated with Yeoak was broader in Goryeo. In terms of repertoire, Goryeo Yeoak performed Dangak, Hyangak, and Baixi, while their Song counterparts performed banquet music and Baixi. Despite their contributions to court musical culture, Yeoak in both dynasties occupied relatively low social status and had limited opportunities for upward mobility.

KEYWORDS

Yeoak
Goryeo
Song dynasty
Jiaofang
Performance forms
Social status