

Disputable Trot: Analyzing the Trot Songs about Historical Events during the 1920s-1950s

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Thesis

The reflectivity and emotional arousability of some of the Trot songs during the Japanese colonial period (1910-1945) and the Korean War (1950-1953) made it a popular music genre during these two periods. The audience and singers favoured, desired, and perceived Trot songs as their outlet for negative emotions during the hardship years.

What is Trot?

- One of the Korean music genres
- First appeared in the 1920s [12]
- T'ürot'ü (Trot) was called *yuhaengga* or *taejung gayo* before the 1970s [12]
- Trot is derived from the English word "Foxtrot," but they have no relationship [1]
- There is also a term "*Ppongchak*" (An onomatopoeia carries the derogatory meaning of the Trot's rhythm) [12]

How disputable is Trot?

-*ppongchak nonjaeng* (The *ppongchak* debate)-

- Mainly two opposing sides:
 - A) Trot was originated from the Japanese Enka
 - B) Trot is indigenous music of Korea
- For people upholding A, they believe that:
 - Trot adopted various musical characteristics such as mode, duple metre, and 7-5 syllabic stanza lyrics from Japanese Enka [12]
 - Most of the Trot songs produced before 1945 were composed in pentatonic scale along with trichord motifs in descending notes, which were similar to Japanese Enka [12]
- For people upholding B, they believe that:
 - Musical characteristics such as duple metre and 7-5 syllabic stanza are not Enka's patent, they exist in *nongak* (The farmers' music) and *koryö gayo* (A poetic folk during the Goryeo Dynasty) [12]
 - The father of Enka, Koga Masao's compositional style received Korean music influence [12]
 - The word Enka was coined around 1973 [12]
- There is no conclusion for the origin of Trot, but Trot and Enka certainly have an indivisible relationship.
- Trot and Enka impacted each other during the Japanese colonial period (1910-1945), and they have their own developments afterward. [8]

Conclusion

From the analysis of the six songs released during the Japanese colonial period and the Korean War. With these songs' stories, creating backgrounds, and stylistic devices, they well recorded and depicted different historical events, as well as expressed people's emotions. The ability of Trot songs to resonate with the audience's self-experiences led Trot songs to success and gained enormous popularity during that period. Besides, these musical works aroused the emotions of the audience and became the spiritual sustenance and outlet for the negative emotions of the Koreans during the Japanese colonial period and the Korean War.

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Lee Aerisu - *Hwangsöngyett'ö* (1932) [6] [16]

- This song is telling the feeling of the protagonist who travels and wanders alone around the ruined site of an ancient palace (*Manwöldae*) that used to be grand and sumptuous at night.
- By reflecting on the lost remnant of an ancient yellow castle, this work was sincerely attempting to portray people's mournful sentiments about colonization.
- This song is the first hit of *yuhaengga*, it sold about fifty thousand copies, which equals around five million copies today. [12]



Ko Boksoo - *T'ahyangsari* (1934) [5]

- The protagonist leaves their hometown and becomes a migrant worker for ten years, and they are missing the good old days.
- This song well reflected the migration event during the 1930s, many Koreans moved to Japan and Manchuria for labour migration. [4] It also expresses a strong feeling of nostalgia for the overseas Koreans. As well as the resentment at the Japanese who occupied their country and made them need to leave their hometown.



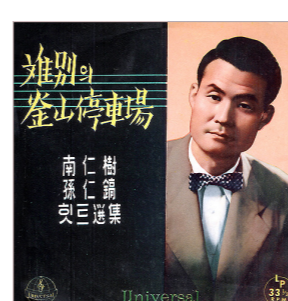
Lee Nanyoung - *Mokp'öüi nunmul* (1935) [10]

- This song gained high popularity in both Korean and Japanese markets. [1]
- This song is about a woman who yearns for her loved one and swears her allegiance to him at the Mokpo Port, but in fact, it is a song that expresses the enmity of Koreans against Japan which robbed them of their homeland.
- Koreans regarded this song as a national song when it was first released, and along with its numerous colonial stories, enabled Koreans to build a community united by common emotions. [1]



Hyun In - *Kusseöra kümsuna* (1953) [3]

- This song realistically describes the hardship and the pain of the Korean war, especially the Hungnam Evacuation, and the lives of refugees in Busan are the focal elements in this song.
- Many families have got separated during the Korean War, and this song resonates powerfully with the audience.



Nam Insu - *Ibyörüi pusanjönggöjang* (1954) [11]

- This song depicts the refugees leaving Busan and returning to their hometowns after the Korean War ended.
- This song recorded the highest sales, about 50,000 copies in the 1950s, and it is a representative song containing the feelings of refugees in Busan during the Korean War. [2]



Lee Haeyeon - *Tanjungüi miari kogae* (1956) [7]

- This song expresses the genuine sentiments of losing loved ones during the Korean War.
- It is one of the most representative works of many war-related popular songs released in the mid to late 1950s, and it is a work that well shows the trend of tragic realism popular songs that emerged immediately after the Korean War. [8]