Singing in the Life of Grandmother Choe, a Survivor of Japanese Military Sexual Slavery

My dissertation is a study of the musical life of Korean survivors of the Japanese “comfort women” system, by which tens or perhaps hundreds of thousands of girls and young women were forced into sexual slavery to Japanese soldiers during the Pacific War. Approximately two hundred fifty South Korean women have come forward and given testimony as former sex slaves. There are many reasons why I chose this subject: the fact that these women were compelled to learn and perform Japanese and Korean songs in the “comfort station” (see Hanguk jeongsindae 1993, 1995); the fact that they traveled all over the Pacific, East and Southeast Asia and collected together songs of many countries, which, taken together, are a kind of map of the consequences of Japanese imperialism; the fact that many of them were sold or pressured into the South Korean domestic entertainment industry after the war, singing, pouring drinks, and in some cases selling their bodies to American and Korean soldiers and civilians. Much like outsiders such as Jews and Gypsies in Eastern Europe, the former sexual slaves, marginalized in Korean postcolonial society, often took up musical professions. In general, colonial and postcolonial East Asia demonstrate a close relation of entertainment labor to sexual exploitation and violence.
Kim Bok-dong, a survivor of Japanese military sex slavery during World War II and a tireless human rights activist, died Jan. 28 in Seoul, South Korea.
Kim Bok-dong, a survivor of Japanese military sex slavery during World War II and a tireless human rights activist, died Jan. 28 in Seoul, South Korea, at the age of 92. In honor of Kim's lifelong work seeking justice for sexual slavery victims, the Korean American Forum of California hosted a memorial at the comfort women Peace Monument, which Kim helped build, at Central Park in Glendale, California, on Sunday. Though Kim didn't leave behind any known family, thousands around the world gathered this week to pay tribute. "She lived a life of total transformation," Phyllis said, "from a victim who spent almost 50 years in silence to a leader of this movement that empowered so many other women." Comments (0). Share to Facebook. Though the systematic sexual enslavement of Korean women by the Japanese military is a harrowing topic, it is important that this book exists and these women's stories are told so thoroughly. I loved that an "academic" book transported me an ocean away. I felt like I was with the women, learning and laughing with them, even before listening to the recordings of their voices. I do have particular interest in this subject, having briefly visited the House of Sharing. Studying their singing is a useful way to go around all the baggage that the label "sexual slavery" comes with, because they have perfect control over their songs unlike their lives. It is a very easy read too. Maybe a little too easy, and that is probably why I cannot decide how I should take it as an academic reference book. The Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan (commonly known as The Korean Council) is a Korean non-governmental organization advocating the rights of the surviving comfort women and lobbying the Japanese government to take actions of a full apology and compensation. Since its foundation in 1990, the Korean Council has been operating on national and transnational stages. Within South Korea, the council has been helping the former comfort women and encouraging the in the wake of the system of sexual slavery for the Japanese military during the Asia-Pacific War (1930-45), survivors in South Korea lived under great pressure not to speak about what had happened to them, although rumors of the so-called "comfort women" system circulated throughout society. Many of these women reckoned with their experiences and forged senses of self within the opacity of song, which allowed them to express themselves precisely without explicitly divulging their pasts. But the women continued to sing. They sang songs that told the unwritten histories of their lives, that displayed the identities that they had carved out of a lifetime of struggle and hardship, and that helped them forge and maintain relationships with others. aus Singing in the Life of Grandmother Choe,* a Survivor of Japanese Military Sexual Slavery Joshua D. Pilzer University of Hong Kong Fournal of Asian Music Research Seoul National University 25 2003 1) Singing in the Life of Grandmother Choe,* a Survivor of Japanese Military Sexual Slavery Joshua D. Pilzer University of On) General introduction dissertation 1 sa much of the literary, if of Korean survivors of the Japanese "wove! women" system, by which tensor perhaps herded of thousands of ge and young women were forces into male sexy Uo Japanese soldiers during he Pac War, Approximately two hun