Embedded Korean in American Oriental Imagination: Kim Sisters' "Their First Album"

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▌ ABSTRACT ▌

This paper considers how Koreans found their positions in the complex, overlapping, disjunctive, and interconnected "Oriental" repertoires in the early Cold War years. When we use the term, Oriental, it should require careful translation from context to context because it may be subject to very different sets of contextual circumstances. Klein views Cold War Orientalism in the complex of various regions including East Asian and Southeast Asian countries; however, when Koreans are contextualized at the center of the discussion the Orientalism produces another discursive meaning. Even though many great researches have been done on Korean immigrations, Korean American literatures, and US-Korea economic, political, and foreign relations, not many discussions about Korean American popular cultures have been discussed in the basis of the Oriental discourse in the United States.For this argument, this paper investigates the performative trajectory of a girl group "Kim Sisters" who began to sing at the US military show stages in South Korea in 1952 during the Korean War. They moved to Las Vegas show stages in 1959 and later appeared in Ed Sullivan Show more than thirty times during the 1960s and 70s. Meanwhile, they not only returned to South Korea often times to perform at the stages for Korean audiences in South Korea but also played at the shows for Korean immigrants in the United States.

Korean American immigration to the United States has followed a different route from the majority of Asian American population such as Chinese or Japanese Americans, which means that efforts to compare this particular group to the others may be unnecessary. Rather doing comparative studies, this paper, therefore, focuses on the formation of the intersecting and multiple identities of Korean female entertainers who were forced or forced themselves to be incorporated into the American popular "Oriental" imagination, which I would call "embedded" identities. This embeddedness has been continuously maintained in the configuration of Korean characters in the United States. This will help not only to observe the discursive aspect of Asian American identity politics but also to claim a space for comparatively invisible Korean characters in the United States which has been often times neglected and not brought into a major Asian American or Oriental historical discourse. This paper starts with American scenes at the beginning of the twentieth century to trace Americans Oriental imagination which was observable in the various American cultural landscape and popular music soundscape. It will help us more clearly understand the production and consumption of the Korean "Oriental" performances during the early Cold War period and especially the Korean performance in the American venue, silently overshadowed into the political, social, and cultural framework.

Key Words
Asian American, Orientalism, Kim Sisters, Ed-Sullivan Show, Interchangeability, Korean Identity

Introduction

Christina Klein argues that America's interest in Asia after WWII was due to the circumstance of

the Cold War, which made Asia important to the United States in ways that had not been before, that is, to what she names "Cold War Orientalism." Instead of Edward Said's Middle East-oriented discourse, her American Orientalism lays in the period between 1945 and 1961 when the United States expanded its political, military, and economic power in the regions from Korea, China, Taiwan, Japan, the Philippines, and Indonesia to the Pacific across the Southeast Asian countries. The ambition for American expansion to Asia and the Pacific, however, has already started in the nineteenth century.[1] Even the desire goes back to the earlier times when Europeans arrived at the American shore by accident, hoping to find a route to India. Considered the entire historical context, it seems almost impossible to refer to Orientalism with a definite meaning. As Raymond Williams states in "Ideas of Nature", some words are not only impossible but irrelevant to define with certain simple names of things and effects, especially in the case of more complicated ideas (Raymond 67-68).What matters in those words is not proper meaning but the history and complexity of meanings because of the conscious changes or consciously different use. What matters in Orientalism is more in its complexity and accumulation of meanings in the historical and socio-cultural context. Borrowing William's attempt to define a word

1) Asians have contributed heavily to the increasing diversity in the United States since 1960s. Originally the interaction between the North American and the Asian continents began since the late 1750s when European explorers searched for quicker routes to India and at the same time Asians found themselves in North America. The founding of the Manila Colony in St. Malo Bayou near New Orleans by Filipino sailors has been a matter of academic discussion for some time, but most scholars put the date in the 1760s, making it the first Asian settlement in U.S. This means that as Western world was seeking new ways to reach Asia, Asia was also exploring the West. There are other evidences of Asian presence in America even at the earlier period. Sailors from the Philippines and China are reported to have sailed with Spanish galleons along with the routes between Manila and Spanish ports in Louisiana, California, Mexico, and Panama. Filipinos were among the landing party at Morro Bay, California, with Pedro de Unamumo in 1587. Chinese sailors were employed in the shipping trade in New England and the Pacific Northwest in the 1800s. Even decades later, Jefferson convinced Congress that the Lewis and Clark expedition would "put as the first motive a North-American road to India and the introduction of Asiatic trade over that road (Smith, 1950, p.23)". In a 1848 address on his project for a railroad from Lake Michigan to the Pacific, Whitney also declared that the commerce of Asia had been the foundation of all commerce since the earliest ages, controlling the rise and fall of nations. Such continuous efforts to reach Asian countries, to perfect the American own route to Asia, and to form American commerce with Asia revealed the Anglo-American desire to dominate the trade of the "Orient". It was partly because there had been a belief, as H. N. Smith claims in Virgin Land, that the nation which has commanded the trade of Asia in each successive era has been the leader of the world in civilization, power, and wealth (Smith, 1950, p. 25). Throughout the randomly- recorded Asian encounters in American context, it may be not possible to trace precisely an American dominant discourse shaped by imagination over the Orient. Besides when it comes to the word 'Oriental', it requires an articulated investigation since the term itself has been discursively employed in the United States, putting different geographical spaces together into a holistic and inexplicit imagination. It is told that the 'Orient' is derived from Latin word *oriens* meaning 'east'. Thus, depending on where we are at, the place to be referred to as the 'Orient' can be various. That is why the Orient is designated sometimes as the East Asia and sometimes as the Middle East or sometimes somewhere between them, creating unidentified and liminal spaces. Especially in the American context, which adopted most European conventions at the beginning of national consolidation and later found itself in a different diplomatic and political location, the definitional aspect has become more complicated.

"nature", this paper aims to the enrichment and the extension of the discussion surrounding Orientalism. What is Orientalism when it is applied to a more articulated context? This paper attempts to answer this question, considering how Koreans found their positions in the complex, overlapping, disjunctive, and interconnected "Oriental" repertoires in the early Cold War years. When we use the term, Oriental, it should require careful translation from context to context because it may be subject to very different sets of contextual circumstances. Klein views Cold War Orientalism in the complex of various regions including East Asian and Southeast Asian countries; however, when Koreans are contextualized at the center of the discussion the Orientalism produces another discursive meaning. Even though many great researches have been done on Korean immigrations, Korean American literatures, and US-Korea economic, political, and foreign relations, not many discussions about Korean American popular cultures have been discussed in the basis of the Oriental discourse in the United States.

For this argument, this paper investigates the performative trajectory of a girl group "Kim Sisters" who began to sing at the US military show stages in South Korea in 1952 during the Korean War. They moved to Las Vegas show stages in 1959 and later appeared in Ed Sullivan Show more than thirty times during the 1960s and 70s. Meanwhile, they not only returned to South Korea often times to perform at the stages for Korean audiences in South Korea but also played at the shows for Korean immigrants in the United States. Tracking the different places they performed will bea valuable research because the different spatial performances disclose different audiences' expectations and desires, especially demonstrating the "interchangeable visibility" of Korean characterization in the Oriental discourse that culminated during the early Cold War years in the United States. Kim Sisters had to struggle to distinguish their uniqueness as Koreans among "Oriental groups"or sometimes to hide their differences as Korean, being inexplicitly fused together with other Asian females' identities. There have been already a great number of scholarships on inter-ethnic politics among Asian American communities in American popular culture even though only a few of them have discussed about Korean Americans within the discourse of American Orientalism. One of the scholarships which placed Korean Americans at the center of American popular culture discourse is Hey-Seung Chung's *Hollywood Asians*, which investigates the career of Philip Ahn, a pioneering Asian American screen icon as well as the son of celebrated Korean nationalist Dosan Ahn Chang Ho. In that she suggests cross-ethnic performance of a Korean entertainer in the construction of Hollywood's "Oriental genres" from 1930s to 1950s, this paper finds commonalties in her argument on cross-ethnic performance, but it is different in its spatial and temporal scopes which extends from cinematic representation to televisual/theatrical one, that is, from Hollywood to a newly emerged form of media in the postwar years–television, and from a male entertainer before 1950s to female entertainers after 1950s. The television structure is an important aspect in analysis of Kim Sisters performance since the early years of television resembled that of radio and vaudeville, successfully making the transition to the new medium. Programs with a vaudeville theme could be found semi regularly on the prime-time schedule from the late 1940s until the early 1970s. The early variety programs appropriated the form of vaudeville shows, as the idea of various acts putting on brief performances worked well on television. Kim Sisters' performance in South Korea military show stages, vaudeville shows in Las Vegas and later its transition to a variety show on television explain a paradoxical circulation and reception of Korean people as well as American popular cultural scenes between the United States and Korea during the early years of the Cold War.

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Invisible Korean in Oriental Scenes

By the time Asian American emerged in the 1960s, fueled by the same civil rights issues driving other minority groups to seek equal representation within American society, 'Asiatic' or 'Oriental' description come to mean offensive to those people who were born in the United States and wanted a phrase that represented their ethnic heritage and at the same time their American roots. At the same time, by being defined as constructions of the East by the West during colonial influence on and participation in the imperialist project in the field of postcolonial studies, the term "Oriental' has recently come under severe attack for its implicitly and explicitly ethnocentric, exploitative content. However, regardless of perceptions of perjorativeness, an important factor in the usage of 'Oriental' is that it collectively refers to cultural, ethnic and national groupings of people who do not necessarily identify themselves as associated, and hence can lead to inaccurate assumptions about similarity. This matters because the groupings are intimately related to the way that a person develops one's own personal identity in the everyday life. For instance, the way Kim Sisters's ethnic and national identities in the personal level which was grouped with other Asians and erased in the dynamics of oriental discourse, mirrors the same way most Korean immigrants has been "quietly" rooted in the soil of the United States and formulated their liminal ethnic space in the grouped "Oriental" or "Asian" identity.

There are many different cases to show the Orient at the turn of the century had indicated a different meaning than it was in the 1950s. For instance, when the Oriental Theater which was located a mile north of downtown and a mile south of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee opened on July 2, 1927, it featured 2 minaret towers, three marvelous stained glass chandeliers, six large-than-life Buddhas, several hand drawn murals, eight porcelain lions, dozens of original draperies, and hundreds of elephants. The motif is not what first comes to mind today as being 'Oriental'. Designed by Gustave A. Dick and Alex Bauer, the themes of the décor are East Indian, with no traces of Chinese or Japanese images.[2]Other Oriental-themed architectural designs around this time can be found in the emerging movie theaters. At the turn of the twentieth century, American entertainment used to be dominated by stage plays and vaudeville which provided live performances, but this changed when movie theaters, which were

2) Landmark Theatres. "Oriental Theatre" Milwaukee, WI.
http://www.landmarktheatres.com/market/milwaukee/orientaltheatre.htm

known as nickelodeon theaters, came into the picture in 1907. Even though most films shown during this time were short silent movies often accompanied by a piano, as film technology in the 1920s allowed movies to have sound, movie theaters changed the landscape of entertainment especially in New York. It started out as 'extravagant' movie palaces with the Regent in New York City built in 1913 as the first of the 4,000 theaters in the United States constructed between 1914 and 1922. Movie theaters became very popular and successful due in part to their 'extravagance' as well as to their low admission prices and unreserved seating. Most movie theater lobbies of this era were decorated with European furnishings which gave most moviegoers the feeling of being like royalty while other theaters had Egyptian, Turkish, Chinese, and Persian themes to entice different consumers.[3] It is hard to generalize the idea of 'Oriental' imagination of the time with these few architectural styles, but the 'Oriental' seems at this time to be more "oriented" to the Africa and Middle East, by following European perception and viewpoint of the Orient.

Fig. 1 The Oriental Theater, Milwaukee, WI

Fig 2. The Regent, New York City, NY

On the other hand, some parlor songs distributed in the 1910s and1920s, which were intended to be performed in the parlors of middle class homes by amateur singers and pianists, produced a different focus of the Oriental imaginary than the above examples of architectural designs at the same period. The songs include more East Asian places such as China, Japan, Thailand, and Singapore in the form of Fred Fischer's *Siam* (1915), Irving Berlin's *From Here To Shanghai* (1917), Chas. P. Shisler and Billy James' *When It's Moonlight in Tokio* (1917), L.Wolfe Gibert and Anatol Friedland's *Singapore* (1918), Otto Motzan's *In China*(1919), and Richard A. Whiting's *The Japanese Sandman* (1920).[4]

3) Rossheim, John. "From Silent Sneezes to 'Avatar' : American movie-going keeps evolving, from nickelodeons, movie palace, drive-ins and Odorama to 3D Imax". Accessed by Nov 22, 2010.
http://local.msn.com/article.aspx?cp-documentid=23538237&page=print

4) "Music About Asian Places, Page 2." In Parlor Songs: Popular sheet music from the 1800s to the 1920s. http://parlorsongs.com/issues/2003-1/thismonth/featureb.phpAccessed by Nov 29, 2010.

Fig. 3 Parlor song musical sheet covers in the 1910s to the 1920s[5)]

As shown in the popular imagination through architectural designs and popular music sheets, the oriental seems to mean around this time a mixture of "remote others" based on various geographical people, including Arabs, Egyptians, Javanese, Nubians, Cingalese, Soudanese, Moors, Chinese, Indians, Hawaiians, Samoans, and Japanese.[6)]However, the longing for something "remote, primitive, and exotic" was another name of "filthy, naughty, and exclusive". By the time the romantic images of China spread throughout the popular cultural expressions, Chinese immigrants were highly restricted due to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Especially in California, Asians and Chinese in particular were already limited to Chinese ghettos, highly dense housing clusters which were prone to fire and violence. Modern-day Chinatown may be a popular tourist destination, but it was once the only place in which Chinese could safely live in the 1920s. It was also a time that Americans viewed the Asian immigrants as competitors for jobs and for land, and began legislating Chinese to the margins of society. It can be observed from these evidences that not only the term "Oriental" had been used to indicate multiple locations, pointing out "the Other" in all but also the term mirrored both expressions of desire and contempt. Another important aspect is that the process of creating the "Oriental" usage has been intimately linked to the process of expanding the United States' national and imperial interests. For instance, some places like Korea had nothing to do with the American imperial concerns due to the "unattractive" Korea's geographic and cultural location. Considered the obvious and unquestionable reason, the effort to trace the invisible Korean in the American Oriental imagination may not be valuable at all. Then, why should this research question be considered? It is because, I argue, the location of Korean Americans in American Oriental imagination or popular cultural images is to reflect how Korean Americans have found their identity in the ambiguous position as "neither one nor the other" and further the inexplicit Oriental identity has still affected on the contemporary Korean Americans' both physical and mental spaces in the United States.

Visible Yellow Orphans in the Shift of Oriental Imagination

Until the 1950s, Korean had not been added into the American Oriental imagination but after the WWII and Korean War the Oriental concept in the American consciousness was in a pivotal shift by locating American enemies like Japanese and Chinese at the forefront of the Oriental discourse through the "red" scare and at the same time by putting more emphasis on "yellow"orphanage. By the time, invisible Korean joined the American Oriental discourse, making a "contribution" to the Oriental

5) See at http://parlorsongs.com/issues/2003-1/thismonth/featureb.php
6) See a documentary film, Expo: Magic of the White City (2005).

shift as the most representative orphan country. Korean immigrants to the United States increased due to two distinctive population groups: one was war brides of United States military men and another was Korean adoptee population. Starting in 1953, some 6,000 Korean women entered the country and Harry Holt brought eight Korean orphans and later established the Holt Adoption Agency, which brought thousands of Koreans orphans to the United States. Throughout the process, Korea on the Americans imagination became clearly visible. However it was more based on imagery on an orphan country, not based on the previous notion of the oriental imagination. Especially after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor and WWII, the Americans' oriental direction shifted to the single-minded target: the Oriental in "yellow faces."

The transformation of the Oriental discourse from"multiple-colored" to "yellow" in the area of East Asia proves the alteration of geographical locations where the United States had to put its emphasis on in the foreign policy. As Edward Said argued in *Orientalism*, the Orientalism had served an implicit justification for European and the American colonial and imperial ambitions, confining them to romanticized images, and drawing exclusive boundaries between 'them' and 'us'.[7]If the oriental notion at the turn of the century was an inclusive as well as an exclusive notion in terms of American imperial ambitions, the term "Orient" after WWII indicated both inclusive and exclusive concepts to defend American democratic values from "red" Asia. Apparently, after WWII and the Korean War, Americans' Oriental imagination became more 'inclusive'in accordance with the policy of containment. Christina Klein exactly argues in *Cold War Orientalism* that the proliferation of Orientalist culture and the expansion of U.S. power were linked together, and the middle-brow Cold War Orientalism was devoted to the culture of containment, and international political and economic integration.[8]However, it was another gesture to strongly exclude the people from the "yellow" countries, the East Asian countries.

All of this process of the Asian-inclusive rhetoric can be articulated in the examination of Kim Sisters' performance. Kim Sister's immigration to the United States should be understood as a political and social act which made a transition from an Oriental act to an Asian American act or from Korean performance to an unidentifiable Oriental performance in the form of adoption of Korean female entertainers. This paradoxical hole of American openness to Asian people was where Kim Sisters found their own liminal space as Asian female entertainers.[9]In era of civil rights awareness, the system, which heavily favored northern Europeans, had come under increasing attack as being racially biased. The attack was not only from the domestic counterculture movements but also from the international realm especially for the communist countries' propaganda purpose. The United States was targeted as a racist country which was not capable to deliver the idea of democratic and free world. Thus, the Immigration and Nationality Act established a new quota system of 20,000 from each country with a total of 170,000 immigrants allowed each year.[10] Further, it gave preference to people with professional skills needed in the United States. This led to dramatic increase in the number of immigrants from all over Asia. Ironically, however, when the term became inclusive, the word 'Oriental' was no use because now

7) Said. Edward. Orientalism. Vintage, 1979.

8) Klein, Christina. Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination 1945-1961. California University Press.

9) Korean immigrants living in the United States increased dramatically after in the 1960s since the Immigration and Nationality Act, popularly known as the Hart-Cellar Act, was signed into law on October 3, 1965. The new law abolished the racist 'national origins' quota system established in 1924, reversing a long succession of anti-Asian legislation.

10) Barnes, Jessica S and Claudette E. Bennett. The Asian Population: US Census 2000 Brief. Washington, DC: U. S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, 2002. P. 9

there was another word to represent the “Oriental”: Asian American. Within the inclusive project of yellow faces, Kim Sisters’ immigration to the United States should be considered as the governmental or socio-political consensus under the government’s tactic cooperation or acknowledgement in order to transform the “Oriental” to the Asian American.

Kim Sisters moved to Las Vegas in February in 1959. Their first contract in America was to perform at the Thunderbird Hotel for four weeks as part of the China Doll Review, the main showroom program. In the United States, their popularity was at its height at the end of the 1960s. The agent Tom Ball who was producing a show at the Thunderbird Hotel, brought them to America. He heard about the Kim Sisters in Los Angeles from one of the GIs that came back from Korea, and visited them to take a look at their performance. Soon after, Kim Sisters signed a contract, getting paid $400 a month for all three of them. Since their mother was not able to get a US visa due to their father’s presence in North Korea, the sisters had to live by themselves.

By the time, the Cold War evoked an enormous campaign of propaganda and psychological warfare on both sides between the United States and the Soviet Union/China. Kim Sisters’ appearance in the American entertainment industry uncovers how the US-Asian relation during this period was operated and manipulated as both domestic and international Cold War strategies. Kim Sisters came to the United States as entertainers, performing “Oriental” act in Las Vegas which can be interpreted in several ways. First, there would be a public demand for the Oriental acts as well as international acts in not only Las Vegas but other places throughout the country at that time. Also, there might have been the government’s intentional efforts to promote Asian acts to consider the changing US-Asia and the Pacific relations. One member of Kim Sisters, Sookja, recalls that at that time the shows of Thunderbird Hotel were all Oriental act, saying that “[From] China Doll Review, every performer was Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, and it’s all international show.” [11]There were also other Asian show productions such as “Holiday in Japan” at the Frontier Hotel, and “Philippine Festival” at the Thunderbird. Also, Kim Sisters was not a unique girl group performer who played the Oriental act. There were other Asian female performers like a Japanese girl group named “Tokyo Happy Coats”, a Philippine group “Sunspot” and some more Korean singers like “Patty Kim” and “Korean Kittens.” Kim Sisters states that“people watch[ed] a lot of Oriental show[s] and they needed it, all different nationality in Las Vegas to perform.”[12]

She also remembers “We sang all rock-and-roll. Our part was to go on stage, do 30 minutes of our own act in the big production show. We did two shows a night for four weeks.” [13]The important question here is what kinds of songs or performances American audiences and public would expect from the Oriental shows. It is said that Kim Sisters would play the ‘Oriental’ songs or American popular songs or Korean traditional folksongs or combination of all these songs (I will come back to this point later in the paper). It is highly guessed that they would perform American songs with the “Oriental” female body.[14]One day, Ed Sullivan, who started his show at the CBS television studio from 1948, came to Kim Sisters’ show at the Stardust Hotel and later he brought all staff to broadcast Kim Sisters’ performance in Las Vegas. Sookja recalls that they were lucky to have a visit from Ed Sullivan; however,

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11) Kwon, Myongja Lee. An Interview with Sook-ja Kim, Oral History conducted by Kwon February -April 1996.Produced by Las Vegas Women in Gaming and Entertainment Oral History Project, Department of History, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 1997. P.5

12) Ibid., p.40

13) Ibid., p.7

14) After the contract with the Thunderbird expired, they resigned a contract with Stardust Hotel this time and stayed there for eight and one-half months, doing six shows a night. Their performance at the Stardust was continued for the next fifteen years.

a question can be asked to see if his visit was a coincidence or was intended to promote Asian performance in his show. Kim Sisters appeared 32 times, which was unusual, in total in *Ed Sullivan Show* over ten years from 1959 to 1970, appearing once or twice or three times a year. There is an interesting remark of Sookja, during an interview conducted by Myoungja Lee Kwon, a librarian at the University of Nevada as an oral history project:

> "Four years later, finally, my mother got the visa. She came over. Now, how that happen? We got in very, very closeness with Ed Sullivan. Mr. Ed Sullivan requested our mother is very well known singer in Korea and she's coming in and would you give her a visa so she could come over and sing, sing with us on your show. He says, "fine." So hesen[t] the visa, she came over. She was on the Ed Sullivan show, just my mother and three of us. ….I requested once again to Ed Sullivan, my brother is singing for GI troops in Korea, they are ready to come here and I would like to perform with them in the show, your show."Okay." He sent a visa." (Kwon 15)

Moreover, Kim Sisters' story reported in *Life* Magazine on Feb 22, 1960 reconfirms the possibility that Kim Sisters' performance in the United States in the late 1950s and 1960s was consciously designed in the sociopolitical and ideological contexts or at least was raised in unconscious public demand and mind-set on the "Oriental" imagination. Figure 4-5 shows when Kim Sisters visited their road manager, Bob McMackin's farm in Chicago to take photographs that was published in *Life* Magazine. Even though it is uncertain whether the picture was taken in the particularly conservative place, an American farm in the middle West, on purpose, the images remind of "lucky" Korean orphans who were adopted to a white and benevolent community, watching American television, the very iconic image of American material and democratic victory. The magazine's photographer took more than 2,000 pictures of Kim Sisters, including their performance in Las Vegas shows and Ed Sullivan Shows, and only six appeared in the magazine. The selected pictures matter because they witness most Americans spectatorship and imagination toward Korea, placing Kim Sisters into a certain framework. The context that Kim Sisters' story appeared in the middle of pages inone of the prominent magazines in the United States during the early Cold War years matters.

Fig. 4-5 Kim Sisters in Life Magazine Feb 22, 1960 Issue
(at their road manager, Bob McMackin's farm)

Other Asian performances appeared in *Ed Sullivan Shows* also confirm the "yellow face-oriented"American Oriental imagination. As seen in the pictures, interestingly, most Asian performances were done by females or children. At the beginning of the century, "Oriental" was based on the romanticized images of multiple countries as seen in architectural designs or parlor song sheet covers, and now the 1950s and 60s' American Oriental imagination was more relied on the inclusive and benevolent rhetoric which conveys the victory of American democratic, modernized and westernized

free world into area of the East Asia in particular. As shown in Figures 6- 9, Asian performance resonates American and western sound embodied through the Asian female and children bodies. Figure 4 and 5 picture “Tokyo Happy Coats”, one of the Japan’s first female groups, singing ‘Bye Bye Birdie’and a Korean church choir. Figure 6 is Kyung Wha Chung who plays her violin in 1968and Figure 7shows ten Japanese children known as the Suzuki Violins perform in 1966.[15)]

Fig. 6-9 Asian female and children performance in *Ed Sullivan Show* in the 1960s

Embedded Korean in Oriental Imagination

It has been discussed so far how the orphan imagination has been combined into the American oriental discourse, reinforcing the Asian-inclusive rhetoric and creating a new category of ‘Asian Americans’, instead of the ‘Oriental’ people. Now the complexities of Kim Sisters’ performance are more examined: how Korean female bodies are overlapped with Chinese-themes at the peak of conflicts between the United States and China, creating Kim Sisters’ unidentifiable Oriental character. At this point, we need to come back to Chinese Doll Review, the main show that Kim Sisters first performed at the Thunderbird Hotel. To perform Chinese Doll Review as Koreans, Kim Sisters had to change their physical appearance. Sookja, one of the members, remembers that “We had a pony tail. That was our trademark. Tom Ball would not cut our hair. We had to have long hair because Kim Sisters were remembered as those three pony tail girls. Some drew a caricature of us. Kim Sisters with ponytail and Chinese dress became our trademarks. This is why he demanded. Ball demanded us to wear Chinese dress because now I look back we did not have that bad figure. So they wanted to show off and I didn’t have any idea why they kept asking to wear Chinese dress. But that’s the reason why.”[16)]This explains Kim Sisters had to be dissolved into the previous notions or expectations of American Orientalism.

The further interpretation can start with the name of the show “Chinese” Doll Review which was not “China” Doll Review. A China doll is a doll made partially or wholly out of glazed porcelain. It was popular in Europe from the mid nineteenth century. Unsurprisingly, however, China Dolls did not come from China. The name came from ‘China’ being used to refer to the material porcelain (which presumes Europeans’ contact with China), and the shape of dolls and the production or consumption had nothing to do with China. Thus, now collectors have used the term to describe usually antique dolls with a porcelain head, although the term has been used to describe any doll that has a porcelain, clay or bisque head. The first China dolls were made in Germany in the 1840s by porcelain makers such as KPM Berlin, Meissen, and Royal Copenhagen Denmark. They were also produced in Czechoslovakia (Schlaggenwald), France (Barrios, Jacob Petit), Poland (Tielsch), and Sweden (Rorstrand). Most German China dolls have black hair and blue eyes.[17)]The story of China doll seems to deviate from the point,

15) Leonard, John. A Reality Big Show: A Visual History of The Ed Sullivan Show, New York: Viking Penguin Books, 1992. P.95, 139
16) Kwon, P. 15
17) Morris, Tracy S. “The History of China Dolls” eHow. http://www.ehow.com/

but it helps understand American Oriental imagination especially through the images of China. China dolls were luxurious European products and they were not associated with any Chinese or Asian physical features. However, people would expect to consume the images of China through unconscious colonialist expansion and materialistic possession hidden behind the white physical bodies of China dolls.

The unconscious Oriental imagination through the consumption of China dolls can be more found in an Ozark children song titled "Mommy, buy me a China doll" which is a tale of young girl who wished her mother to trade some family possessions and buy her a China doll. The Ozark is a highland in the Central America, covering much of the southern Missouri, northern Arkansas and eastern Oklahoma. This conservative and isolated place would have little things to do with China. However, people in this area would also internalize the image of China through this folk song starting with "Momma buy me a China doll, Momma buy me a China doll/Momma buy me a China doll. Do, Momma do!/What could we buy it with, Eliza Lou?....."[18)]

Fig. 10 A typical German China doll

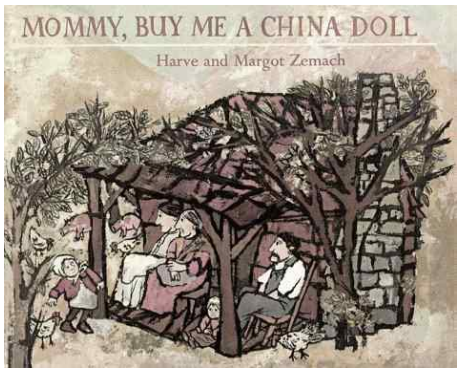

Fig. 11 Harve Zemach and Margot Zemach's children book adapted by Ozark songs, Mommy, Buy Me a China Doll

The most important question asked is when these porcelain China dolls were transformed into Chinese dolls which featured actual Chinese or Asian female bodies. In 1958 a movie titled *China Doll* came out, which was directed by Frank Borzage and starred by Victor Mature and Li Hua Li. The story is about an Air Force captain Cliff in China who wakes up after a night of drinking to discover he has "purchased" the housekeeping services of comely, young Shu-Jen from her father like buying a China doll. Disappointed by Cliff's insistence on staying out late in bars, Shu-Jen leaves for her home when Cliff was aware that she is carrying her child. He finds her and marries her in a traditional Chinese wedding ceremony, and spends a 'happy' life with his wife and daughter until he hears the base is under attack by Japanese bombers. This movie exactly shows how Americans' Chinese imaginary were operated by using a term China Doll. The years from 1958 to 1962 brought an unprecedented tension of East-West confrontations, several of which involved nuclear power. In 1958 alone, there was a series of high-stakes showdowns between the United States and China over Taiwan. Just two days after US marines landed in Lebanon, Mao Zedong authorized preparations for a confrontation with the United States in the Taiwan Strait. He aimed to "pin down the US imperialists and prove

about_5373286_history-china-dolls.htmled by Dec 2,2010.

18) Folklorists have explored the folksongs in the Ozark Mountains. See Randolph, Vance and Frances Emberson. "The Collection of Folk Music in the Ozarks" The Journal of American Folklore, Vol. 60, No. 236 (Apr.-Jun., 1947), pp.115-125.

China supports the national liberation movements in the Middle East with not only words but also deeds." [19] Under the political circumstance, it was right after one year that Kim Sisters came to the United States, performing Chinese Doll Review.

Fig. 12 1958 Movie *China Doll*

Fig. 13 Kim Sisters' early performance, being called "Korean Cuties or Korean Dolls" at US military shows in South Korea during the Korean War

Kim Sisters' "Their First Album"

Interestingly, Kim Sisters had already played the 'Oriental' songs at the US military show stages even before the Chinese Doll Review in Las Vegas. (I think the Oriental songs performed in Korea around that time will be a whole different project, so it is not covered in this paper). They played the 1950s' Dean Marin's famous song 'I Want to Get You on a Slow Boat to China' and a Japanese song 'Shina no yoru/ China Night'. And, after they first appeared in *Ed Sullivan Show*, Kim Sisters was offered to record their first album. The repertories of the album includes various songs ranging from American popular songs, two Korean folk songs, one Hawaiian-theme song, and two Chinese-theme songs which were 'China Lullaby' and 'China Nights'. Interestingly, the two Korean folksongs sung in Korean were also arranged with Chinese musical sound. One of them 'Arirang' is available for the analysis and posted on this paper's online blog. Their vocal style is exactly like other traditional Arirang versions which feature Korean traditional musical tone and rhythm. However, instruments played in the background present Chinese traditional sound and rhythm. It is not sure which instruments were played for this recording even though a major instrument seems like Kayagum, a traditional Korean instrument, with which makes Chinese sound for this song.

It is obvious that Kim Sisters' Oriental character was expected to reflect and emphasize Chinese-themes throughout this album. The question is why the recording company intended to produce this album with a Chinese-theme. It might have been the same reason as Tom Ball produced Chinese Doll Review in Las Vegas.In general, this album presents contradictory Americans' Oriental imagery that has been maintained throughout history of American 'Orient' which is both exclusive and inclusive. By including American songs, Hawaiian songs, Chinese songs, and Korean songs, it apparently seems to be international or inclusive World music with the focus on the Chinese-theme cover. However, by including China, Korea, and Hawaii, it simultaneously excludes them as "them." The album title uncovers the clear boundary between Kim Sisters' Oriental sound and American music, making it "THEIR First Album."Kim

19) McMahon, Robert J. The Cold War: A Very Short Introduction. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003. P. 57

Sisters' hybrid and unidentifiable character can be interpreted in an extension that the U.S. government unconscious or conscious efforts or American consensus to contain and possess Asia and the Pacific region, and at the same time mock communists, including Chinese, in the Red Asia.

Fig. 14 Kim Sisters' "Their First Album" in 1960

In this sense, it is no wonder that Kim Sisters' performances were far from the romanticized Oriental images portrayed in the 1910s and 1920s, focusing on beautiful, staticand submissive Asian female figure. Kim Sisters' figure was rather presented in more aggressive, dynamic, and sometimes ludicrous ways of looking. The main picture printed in *Life* Magazine in 1960shows exactly Kim Sisters' facetious character wearing a comical facial expression.[20] In addition to the ludicrous representation, their performance always came along with various instruments which emphasize dynamic, eccentric and aggressive performances.[21] Their interchangeable performances in playing different instruments each time was successful to make their characters more dynamic, eccentric and aggressive. The instruments used provide audiences with clues to the music's identity. While their vocal style was similar to that of American popular songs of the time, the instruments Kim Sisters played were various including Korean instruments like kayakeum, Changku, and Seungmoobook as well as Chinese instruments including banjo and mandarin. Further, at the beginning of the show, Kim Sisters used to play wearing Korean costume over a Chinese dress, and after the Korean instrument Kayaguem show, they took the Korean costume and sang American songs in a Chinese dress.

It is observable that Kim Sisters' popularity in the 1960s was partly derived from their dynamic and interchangeable performances. In the first Ed Sullivan Shows, Aija played the base, big standard base, Sookja played the tenor sax, and Mia played the drums. They sang the McGuire Sisters' biggest hit song, 'Sincerely', making sound similar to them. Also, during 32 times' appearance in the show,

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20) See Life Magazine Nov 22, 1960 Issue p. 49-50, 54
http://books.google.com/books?id=gFUEAAAAMBAJ&pg=PA55&lpg=PA5
\5&dq=kim+sisters+life+magazine&source=bl&ots=y2cTbCeDZw&sig=mAj
1RUVYUApfgSuSY54K9caVNxw&hl=en&ei=gAUHTZeZFcK3nAfT2pnlD
Q&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=8&ved=0CCwQ6AEwBw#,
Also, see Kim Sisters' performance with Kim Brothers, singing "Little Darlin"
in Ed Sullivan Show at
http://channel.pandora.tv/channel/video.ptv?ref=na&redirect=prg&ch_userid
=swzzzz&prgid=4417540&categid=

21) See Ed Sullivan Show on Youtube: "The Kim Sisters' sing Goin' Outa My Head" at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rx4LJja5aac&feature=related and Kim Sisters' sing La Bamba Medlehttp://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1gX7g8f
-DfI&feature=related

they had to come with a different program. Sookja recalls:

> "We came with a different instrument every time, different number all the time. There was always what are you going to bring next time? Now we ran out of instruments. Ed Sullivan said, "What you going to come next time? I said, jokingly "what about the bagpipe? He said, you got it. You got two months."(Kwon 26)

Fig. 11-13 Kim Sisters with various instruments in Las Vegas Shows and *Ed Sullivan Show*

It is little doubtable that Kim Sisters' Oriental character was a byproduct created in the Cold War context whether their performance was created by Kim Sisters themselves or by American public demands. As briefly mentioned above, by the early 1960s China had in many respects supplanted the Soviet Union as America's most feared adversary. Of two communist giants, the Soviet Union and China, China appeared far the more militant, hostile, and belligerent. China's initiation of a brief border war with India in October 1962 just affirmed US suspicious about Beijing's aggressive tendencies. National security planners of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations were convinced that the increasingly virulent Sino-Soviet split had just emboldened Beijing's leaders, making them more "aggressive", "adventuristic", and "unpredictable" which was exactly shown in the characters of Kim Sisters' performances.

Conclusion: Performing Korean in the Oriental Framework

This paper has focused on Kim Sisters'interchangeable, unidentified, and aggressive 'Oriental' sound which was interconnected with the sociopolitical and ideological contexts. At the turn of the twentieth century, the term Oriental tended to connote romanticized, aesthetic, and exotic beauty of the Middle East and East Asia. However, after WWII and Korean War the word has been focused on the East Asian regions reflecting the changing US relations with Asia and the Pacific. Koreanness began to be imprinted to American Oriental imaginary through the image of an orphan country. This Koreanness has been complicatedly operated with the combination of Chinese or other Asian Pacific (such as Hawaii and Japan) identities, drawing ambiguous lines between enemies and allies in American Oriental imagination. The music that Kim Sisters performed at Las Vegas shows and *Ed Sullivan Show* indicates American audiences' expectations and desires of what to be gazed and to be heard. It is hard to define an 'Oriental' song performed in the 1950s and 60s since it can be variously defined depending on the performers' 'Oriental' identity or performances' Oriental connotation. No one would deny that Kim Sisters' performance, no matter how much their vocality was similar with other American popular girl groups and no matter how many Americans songs they played, was 'Oriental'. Their 'Oriental' performance produced a mutational sound determined under the various sociopolitical and ideological conditions, producing unidentified and interchangeable features. Thus, "THEIR" music did not fit anywhere, and rather emphasized a distinction from American music.

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Discography

I Want to Get You on a Slow Boat to China

Shina no yoru/ China Night

China Lullaby

China Night

Arirang

Hawaiian Wedding Song