

The Early Dance Career of Ch'oe Sünghŭi:

A Hybrid Path of *Ch'um* (Korean Dance) and *Muyong* (Modern Dance)

Yeounsuk Lee

Introduction

Ch'oe Sünghŭi (1911–69), born in Colonial Korea, was a captivating dancer. When she was sixteen years old, she began to learn how to dance in Tokyo, and from the 1930s to 1945, as a solo dancer, she enjoyed towering popularity in Imperial Japan and abroad. After 1945, she relocated to North Korea along with her husband, An Mak (1911–58). She died there in 1969. Her life crisscrossed times of imperialism, colonialism, and the Cold War.

In South Korea, Ch'oe was labeled a Japanese collaborator as well as an artist of the North Korean communist regime until the late 1980s. During this period, she remained a taboo subject for research. In North Korea, she succumbed to the tyranny of political dictatorship: she was stripped of all status and privileges, and her husband fell victim to a political purge launched by Kim Ilŏng in 1958. This tragedy made her disappear from public view for some time, and she was forgotten in Japan for a long time.

Research on Ch'oe began in the late 1980s as information on her turbulent life and career became accessible to the public. So far, the key research results include two important biographies, one published in 1995, the other published in North Korea in 2012. Scholars have explored her dance career from various perspectives,

including hybrid Korean-Western dance, the “modern girl,” feminism, “Asia-ism” (*Asiajuui* in Korean, *Ajiashugi* in Japanese), colonialism, and postcolonialism.

A number of works on Ch’oe have been published in Korea along with key source materials from the late 1980s. By the end of the 1990s, biographical research on her was dominant, as represented in work by Chŏng Pyŏnggho and other scholars⁽¹⁾. In contrast, from 2000 on, scholars have paid more attention to Ch’oe’s dance repertoire and performances and dealt with her dance career from a cultural studies perspective. According to Han Kyŏngja, as of 2011, publications on Ch’oe included eighteen monographs, fifty journal articles, nine PhD dissertations, seventeen MA theses, and eleven conference proceedings⁽²⁾.

In Japan, in contrast, Ch’oe has been remembered and studied quite differently. After 1945, Ch’oe — once highly praised by Kawabata Yasunari (1926–72) and other Japanese intellectuals and cultural leaders in the pre-1945 period — was largely forgotten as Japan’s efforts to erase the legacies of imperialism intensified amid the Cold War. One exception was Yuasa Katsue (1910–82), a journalist who portrayed Ch’oe, in his book published in 1947, as an artist who invoked the nostalgic past and offered a tragic image of colonial and postcolonial life⁽³⁾.

Yuasa played a critical role in research on Ch’oe in Japan. He was raised in Kyŏngsŏng until his graduation from high school there, and in that sense he had a special attachment to Korea. In one of his novels, *Kannan’i* (A Baby), which made him famous, Yuasa depicted a love story involving a Korean girl and a Japanese boy. His research on Ch’oe is informed by his Korean experience and shows how she can be researched from the dual perspectives of colonialism and postcolonialism.

To date, authors who have published books on Ch’oe in Japan include Takashima Yūsaburō, Kim Ch’anjŏng, and Nishiki Masaaki⁽⁴⁾. Outside Korea and Japan, Judy Van Zile and Emily Wilcox are leading research on Ch’oe in the broader context of Chinese, Asian, and Western dance traditions, and their work offers valuable border-crossing and comparative insights⁽⁵⁾.

In this article, I pay attention to Ch’oe Sūnghŭi’s dance lessons from 1926 (the year that Ch’oe started as a dance student) to 1934 (the year that she performed a

dance titled *Eheya noara*, a turning point in her career) by focusing on three issues. First, I examine the social and cultural contexts in which Ch'oe encountered modern dance in Kyōngsōng (now Seoul). Ishii Baku, her Japanese dance teacher, played a key role in her transformation from a colonial Korean girl to a successful modern dancer. Ishii introduced modern dance to Ch'oe and exerted a great influence on her. Ishii was not constrained by the political barriers that separated Colonial Korea from Imperial Japan and helped Ch'oe to transcend the racial hierarchy that characterized the period. In particular, Ishii guided Ch'oe as she came to terms with the “modern body” versus the “traditional body” — a transition that Ch'oe had to undergo. It is often suggested that the memories and habitus inherent in the body are not easily removed, so in this sense Ch'oe's introduction to modern dance bore special meaning in the history of Korean dance.

Second, I explore the roles that her brother, Ch'oe Sūng'il (1901–?), and her husband, An Mak, played in the development of her dance career anchored in modernity. Interestingly, both her brother and her husband were well-educated literary figures associated, in one way or another, with the Korean Proletarian Art Movement. Both of them embraced socialism as the guiding spirit of their professional lives and pursued cultural activity as an avenue for putting their ideology into practice. The close association with Ch'oe Sūng'il and An Mak naturally made Ch'oe Sūnghŭi personify the ideas of the “modern body” through socialist intellectualism. In traditional Confucian culture, the ruling *yangban* class of men distanced themselves from physical labor and performance art that required use of the body, but Ch'oe Sūng'il and An Mak — both of *yangban* lineage — were different, and their influence on Ch'oe Sūnghŭi should not be ignored.

Third, to contextualize Ch'oe's dance, steeped in new ideas of the modern body but still rooted in traditional Korean aesthetics, I discuss how Japanese audiences viewed her performances. Many Japanese intellectuals and cultural leaders were attracted to her dance on the cusp of modernity. What did Japanese admirers see in Ch'oe's dance performances in the mid-1930s? Why were they attracted to these performances? How did Korean residents of Japan react to Ch'oe's modern dance, which

gained popularity at the center of Imperial Japan? Attempting to answer these questions will shed light on the features of her dance that opened a new chapter in the history of Korean dance.

Ch'oe Encounters Modern Dance through Ishii Baku

Ch'oe Sünghüi encountered modern dance when she was fifteen years old in 1926. From March 21 to 24 that year, Ishii Baku performed dance routines at Kyöngsöng Public Hall (Kyöngsöng konghoidang), and Ch'oe was completely enchanted by his dance performances, which opened up a totally new world for her⁽⁶⁾.

At that time, Ch'oe had just graduated from Sukmyöng Girls' High School with academic distinction. She was interested in music but had never been exposed to dance performances. How can we understand her sudden fascination with modern dance? Scholars have suggested that her experience with modern dance was similar to that of religious mysticism or artistic mysticism. In any case, Ch'oe immediately made up her mind to learn modern dance, and she asked Ishii for guidance.

When Ch'oe wanted to leave for Japan to learn dance under Ishii, her family members and acquaintances were vehemently opposed. A newspaper article on March 27, 1926, noted that "Sukmyöng Girls' High School officials determined that it would tarnish the school's honor if they allowed their school's graduates to pursue [the] dance profession. For that reason, they sent two school teachers, and the latter hurried to a train station with Ch'oe's mother in order to stop her from leaving⁽⁷⁾."

Ch'oe was emboldened by her brother's encouragement and protection. Without his support, it would not have been possible for her to escape from the deterrent forces of premodern Korean society. Her departure from Kyöngsöng occurred at a moment when premodern and modern worldviews clashed in Korean society. Ch'oe succeeded in following Ishii to Japan despite her parents' vigorous objections⁽⁸⁾.

Kyöngsöng was being transformed in the 1920s into a modern city under the "cultural policies" (*munhwa chöngch'aek*) of the colonial government. Western capitalism and modern culture were increasingly introduced to Kyöngsöng via Japan.

Kyōngsōng became a meeting place of lingering legacies and modern elements — a transitional phase in which many residents were caught between urban dreams and harsh, sometimes frustrating, daily realities⁽⁹⁾.

In other words, Kyōngsōng in which Ch'oe's emotions and bodily senses were formed and nurtured was emerging as a modern city in which despair and fantasy as well as elements of the premodern and the modern crisscrossed. Interestingly, the city was divided into two areas, the northern area (Korean section) and the southern area (Japanese section), along the Chongno streets that marked the division between colonial masters and colonized subjects. Both duality and division characterized the urban space of Kyōngsōng, and Ch'oe matured emotionally and intellectually in such an urban environment. She encountered Ishii when he brought modern dance to the Kyōngsōng Public Hall, located in the southern Japanese section⁽¹⁰⁾. In contrast, in the northern Korean section, the Kükchang Wōnkaksa was a semi-modern theater in which traditional Korean dance and music such as *ch'anggük* (musical) were performed and catered to Korean audiences.

Regarding why Ch'oe Sūnghūi was captivated by modern dance when she encountered it for the first time, Yi Chin'a suggests that her fascination was related to both her Western-style physicality and her modern education⁽¹¹⁾. Ch'oe had a beautiful body according to Western standards when it came to dance performance, and she had acquired literacy in Japanese through her modern education. Nonetheless, she did not abandon her traditional Korean sensitivities, which her family environment had deeply nurtured. Thus, given her physical endowments and cultural traditions, Ch'oe was well positioned to learn and perform modern dance as introduced by Ishii.

In Tokyo, Ch'oe began to learn dance under Ishii's instruction. The story has it that she practiced dance for about fifteen hours a day for three years. After acquiring some basic skills in modern dance, she returned to Korea to start her dance career. There were ups and downs in her new adventure in Kyōngsōng, and eventually she decided to go back to Tokyo to refashion her dance repertoire. There, from 1933 on, under Ishii's guidance, Ch'oe began to learn Korean dance that would connect her

“modern body” to her native sensitivity.

Initially, she did not like the suggestion of learning Korean dance because dance in Korea was often associated with the social class of courtesans or outcasts. But Ishii — a Japanese dancer often called a dancing poet or who called himself a “dancing idiot” (“dancing blockhead” or *odoru baka*) — was insistent. His advice stemmed from his own experience, a mix of tradition and modernity. Ishii, born into a poor family in Akita in northern Japan, was initially trained by Giovanni Vittorio Rosi, an Italian dancer, in Tokyo. After some training, he went to Europe, where he was immersed from 1923 to 1925 in the style of *Neue Tanz* (a new German-style dance) that belonged to an expressionist movement. Upon returning to Japan, Ishii made a tour of dance performances in Manchuria and Korea and tried to reconnect himself to his cultural roots.

Ch’oe soon learned Korean dance under the guidance of Han Sung Jun (1874–1942), who had established his professional dance career in Japan. Ch’oe proved to be a quick learner. In 1934, she staged her first solo Korean dance performance, which Ishii choreographed, at *Nihon seinen kaikan*. It was a great success, and her fame instantly shot up in Tokyo. Unlike other Japanese cultural elites, Ishii had a professional eye for body awareness and wanted Ch’oe to express, through Korean dance, the exotic aesthetics of traditional locales. Ishii, himself from a remote part of Japan, was sympathetic to Ch’oe’s upbringing in the colonial peninsula. He remained a source of inspiration for Ch’oe as she delved further into traditional Korean dance and combined it with modern dance.

Without question, Ch’oe Sünghüi was a “modern girl” who pursued “modern dance” (*muyong*) rather than “Korean dance” (*ch’um*)⁽¹²⁾. As a modern dancer, however, she strove to refashion premodern Korean dance engrained in her body and senses. In other words, she attempted to modernize the aesthetics of traditional Korean dance.

Ishii himself always stressed the importance of “traditional local dance” (*kyōdo buyō* in Japanese, *hyangt’o muyong* in Korean). He never discarded his emotionality and physicality rooted in the remote region of northeastern Japan where he was born

and grew up. His emphasis on traditional and local elements in dance is understandable, and it gave him good rapport with young Korean students from peripheral regions who learned modern dance under him. In particular, the dance culture of northeastern Japan, such as Sasara dance, helped Ishii to connect easily with young dancers from Colonial Korea. Over time, he trained several Korean and Chinese dancers, including Cai Ruiyue, from Colonial Taiwan. Ishii's devotion to training students from Japanese colonies was remarkable, and Ishii maintained the dictum that dance was an art the lifeline of which lay in creativity.

From where did his impartial and passionate devotion to these foreign students come? Ishii was certainly different from many Japanese mainstream artists steeped in the arrogance of Japanese imperialism. When he performed a dance in his hometown of Akita, one of his old friends said that it resembled Sasara dance, a local dance. Upon hearing this, Ishii was pleased⁽¹³⁾. He endeavored to express through dance the aesthetics of vitality and the energy of life. His sense of aesthetics, grounded in the peripheral locality and topography of Akita, resonated with students from colonial areas, including Ch'oe Sünghüi.

Other Influences on Ch'oe

In addition to Ishii Baku, those who exerted influence on Ch'oe Sünghüi's professional dance career included brother Ch'oe Sünng'il and husband An Mak. Confucianism dominated Chosŏn society in which those belonging to the ruling class were not supposed to perform dance routines to entertain others, and the profession of dance was not highly regarded. How was Ch'oe Sünghüi, born into a *yangban* family, introduced to dance in the first place? What or who helped her to become an aspirant of dance? It was her brother, educated in Japan, who eagerly espoused modernity.

Ch'oe Sünng'il was a dropout of Paejae High School but entered Nihon University in Tokyo in 1920 and majored in the philosophy of aesthetics. He developed an interest in drama and literature and, from 1923 on, played an active role in a socialist

literary circle in Japan. Back in Kyōngsōng in 1925, he soon joined the Korean Association of Proletariat Front, which prospered for about ten years until 1935, and he was actively involved in theater and literature and worked as a producer at a radio station and as an event organizer for performing arts⁽¹⁴⁾. It was Ch'oe Sūng'il who took his sister to Ishii Baku's dance performance in Kyōngsōng and introduced her to Ishii with the help of the chief editor (Terada) of the culture section of a Kyōngsōng newspaper with whom Ch'oe Sūng'il was acquainted.

In the Confucian cultural tradition, as an elder brother, Ch'oe Sūng'il was supposed to protect his sister from the influence of the outside world, but he took the opposite course of action: he took her to the outside world and encouraged her to undertake an international dance career. He was a member of the colonial intelligentsia with a different outlook on family relations⁽¹⁵⁾.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, Ch'oe Sūng'il was known as a passionate socialist with an open mind and a curiosity about things new and experimental. It is not surprising that he advised his sister to venture into professional dance, which in Korean society had been the monopoly of *kisaeng* ("courtesans") who catered to male clientele⁽¹⁶⁾. He saw new possibilities in dance for aesthetics, which he thought should be refashioned and popularized in Colonial Korea. His proletariat ideological tendency seemed to play a role in encouraging Ch'oe Sūnghŭi to be more sensitive to the aesthetics of traditional Korean dance and to reframe them in a more modern dance style.

In particular, when Ch'oe Sūnghŭi returned to Kyōngsōng in 1929, Ch'oe Sūng'il wholeheartedly supported her to establish a dance institute called *Muyong yŏn'guso*⁽¹⁷⁾. Interestingly, however, from the late 1930s on, Ch'oe Sūng'il increasingly took a pro-Japanese stance and eventually supported Imperial Japan's war efforts⁽¹⁸⁾. It is difficult to know to what extent his pro-Japanese transformation affected the dance career of his sister, herself not completely free in those years from political entanglement with Imperial Japan's aggressive policy on China.

An Mak (his original name was An P'ilsūng), a literary critic educated in Russian literature at Waseda University, married Ch'oe Sūnghŭi in Kyōngsōng in 1931.

As a socialist, An was active in the movement of proletarian literature in Japan, with a particular interest in popularizing proletarian art under the spiritual guidance of Kurahara Korehito⁽¹⁹⁾. After his marriage to Ch'oe, An soon began to help her dance career as her manager and choreographer because he was convinced that she had tremendous potential to popularize a form of art that he had tried to articulate as a means of proletarian liberation and modernism. In Ch'oe, An saw possibilities for modernizing local Korean culture and elevating traditional Korean aesthetics. In an article titled “The Issue of Form in Proletarian Art” published in 1930, An suggested that a new art striving toward globalization (modernization) required a new form of expression in addition to artistic creativity⁽²⁰⁾.

From 1929 to 1933, Ch'oe Sünghüi was in Kyöngsöng after having been trained under Ishii Baku in Tokyo for three years. During this period, she tried to establish her dance profession in Korea with a series of new routines guided by Ch'oe Sün'gil and An Mak. In March 1930, she staged her first dance performance in Kyöngsöng featuring traditional Korean dance into which Western dance techniques were incorporated. It was an attempt to modernize Korean dance with a new form of artistic creativity, and it was performed under the name of “new dance” (*sinmuyong*). In particular, the dance reflected An's idea that art should serve as a medium for delivering a social message to the populace⁽²¹⁾.

In theory, the modern dance that Ch'oe performed was distinguished from the “traditional dance” (*ch'um*) usually performed during religious rituals or at village squares in Korean society. Modern dance was envisioned as an art form cut off from the traditional functions of *ch'um* featuring an expression of communion, or the communication of “energy” or *ki*, with nature and the cosmos. In modern dance, bodily movements that expressed one's emotions were considered more important than anything else, and thus the subjectivity of a dancer was taken seriously. In other words, modern dance was a form of complete and autonomous performance art not influenced by an outside principle or energy. Nevertheless, Ch'oe tried to incorporate elements of traditional Korean dance into the repertoire of modern dance of her own creation — a tendency that she further pursued and refined from 1934 on in Japan.

Japanese Cultural Leaders in Praise of Ch'oe's Dance

Kawabata Yasunari, a novelist, watched a series of dances that Ch'oe Sūnghŭi performed with elements of traditional Korean dance in Tokyo in 1934 after having returned there from Korea. Impressed, Kawabata teamed up with other admirers and formed a support group⁽²²⁾. What aspects of her dances captivated these cultural elites of Imperial Japan? Obviously, they were attracted to the unusual aesthetics of Ch'oe's dance performances. It is often argued that the aesthetics of dance share elements across genres and repertoires, yet dance is a form of art created, nurtured, and transformed in specific social environments, cultures, and histories. How did the Japanese admirers perceive and understand the beauty of Ch'oe's dances? Her popularity continued through the 1930s and early 1940s until wartime Japanese society was filled with eerie feelings of international isolation and smoldering fear.

From the early twentieth century on, some Japanese intellectuals wanted to free themselves from the limits of traditional aesthetics and thus launched new art movements in the name of modernism or avant-garde. They were thirsty for modern aesthetics compared with the traditional art of Japan. However, they largely fell short of being able to refresh themselves with a new sense of aesthetic beauty, and they ended up returning to the idea of Japanese beauty. The creation of a cultural environment in which a new sense of aesthetic beauty could flourish required the cultural bravery that would enable them to discard traditional sensitivities, the resoluteness that would allow them to brush off the struggles of daily life, and the strong sense of independence that would equip them to restore their inner selves apart from the social groupism that bound their thinking and behavior.

But Japanese society in the Meiji era, during which Japan attempted to catch up to the modern Western world, did not easily allow individuals to remain free from external interference. They were often forced to give up their individuality under the growing imposition of nationalism. Amid this trend, intellectuals and artists often succumbed to frustration and were dragged back into the conventional paradigm of beauty that forced individuality into collectivity under the fervor of nationalism.

The idea of “Japanese beauty” (*Nihon no biishiki*) was placed into a symbiotic relationship with modern Japan’s nationalism that ran counter to modernism and the avant-garde — movements attempting to cross state boundaries. Once modernism subsided without much success in Japan, the country itself emerged as the ideal locus of beauty. Amid this trend, “Japanese Romanists” (*Rōmanshugisha*) even promoted the idea of the Japanese country as an “irony.” With the collapse of modernism, Japan — reconstructed in aesthetic terms — began to represent international, not national, things. But this effort remained shaky.

Around that time, Ch’oe appeared out of the blue before Japanese audiences. Many of the admirers of her dance were Japanese cultural elites. It seemed that her dance — combining elements of traditional Korean dance and modern Western dance — and her beauty produced a new aesthetic not found in either traditional Japanese aesthetics or modernist movements. Ch’oe represented a space of liberation for Japanese cultural elites who felt stifled in the social politics of nationalism. Her hybrid dance contained elements of Colonial Korea, Japan, Asia, and the West — in other words elements of both colonialism and imperialism, yet subject to none of them. In this way, her dance represented multiple border crossings between tradition and modernity.

In particular, the Korean dance repertoire that Ch’oe adopted in her hybrid dance retained characteristics distinct from either traditional Japanese dance or modern Western dance. For example, her signature piece, known as *Eheya noara*, featured a drunk young *yangban* man in a humorous and lively fashion, and Ch’oe, about 170 centimeters tall, was a perfect fit for the bridegroom’s energetic dance⁽²³⁾. Kawabata found in Ch’oe a beauty filled with border-crossing vivacity and a sense of adventure — rarely found in either Japanese women or Western women. Ch’oe seemed to stand above the horizon of the world in which the Japanese lived and looked directly at her audiences when she was dancing. In Japan, women were expected to reveal their beauty with downcast eyes, and particularly in the performing arts downcast eyes were the norm. But when Ch’oe danced, her eyes insistently moved up and down and absorbed the audience.

Kawabata, who watched Ch'oe's dance performance, commented at a roundtable discussion when the topic moved to the issue of the best dancer in Japan :

I would say without hesitation that it is Sai Shōki (Ch'oe Sūnghūi) ... On the stage Sai uses her body that is taller than others [and] moves like a language and stutters that language while moving as if struggling or bursting forth. Her bodily motions are thus dramatic or sometimes rough-hewn. All this that falls upon us is very tense. Her dances look a bit dark, but it is not a lamenting voice of a weak tone. There is no one comparable to her when it comes to the exuberance of the physical.⁽²⁴⁾

Kawabata continued: “She is not just dancing Korean dance as it is. She makes the old into the new and the weak into the strong and revitalizes what had died. All in all, she brings life to what she seeks⁽²⁵⁾.”

Japanese *bunkajin* or “cultural elites” struggled in the 1930s to find a new life force that could renew the old, strengthen the weak, revive the dead — one that they wanted to find by themselves to dissipate the dark clouds of the time. The *bunkajin* not strong enough to endure the modern Western body politic were attracted to the aesthetics that Ch'oe presented through dance and brought from the colonized land of Korea. Unconsciously or not, they perceived her performances through imperial eyes. Some audiences in Japan called her dance ethnic, whereas others called it the dance of an old village dear to their hearts. Here we also see a hierarchy of power that associated “culture” with “beauty.”

Interestingly, some Koreans among the audience enjoyed Ch'oe's dance in Japan. For them, Ch'oe was obviously a symbol of pride in their country. Kim Talsu, a renowned Zainichi writer, commented thus :

In those days, when it came to Sinkoku Japan (Divine Country of Japan), Korea and the Koreans were helpless and inferior. They were looked down upon that way in Japan... In such a period, Ch'oe Sūnghūi was more than a savior.

Simply speaking, her presence (in Imperial Japan) made the Japanese look at the Koreans differently... Even now there are a lot of talks about who is a great singer or a baseball player of Korean origin, but none of these Zainichi talents are comparable to Ch'oe. To anyone who was desperate to find a hope of any kind or who struggled to grasp a rope of life, Ch'oe was the only person who could offer an answer. And it was just good enough with her lone presence. She had that kind of power.⁽²⁶⁾

The Koreans found an ethnic energy, which they barely sustained, in the dance of Ch'oe. For them, at stake was neither modernism nor tradition but the discovery of Korean ethnicity for which they yearned in the metropolis of Imperial Japan. This was what separated Korean colonial subjects from Japanese cultural elites. In a different context, Ch'oe delivered energy and inspiration to Koreans in the audiences in Imperial Japan.

Conclusion

The performing arts allow artists and audiences to meet each other in an atmosphere of mutual communication. Ch'oe Sünghŭi was no exception. She was always mindful of the audience's expectations and reactions, which she tried to tap to maximize the potential of her border-crossing dance performances.

At the start of her career, Ch'oe did not pay attention to traditional Korean dance, but eventually she integrated it into her professional repertoire. In particular, her performance of shamanic dances was greatly praised, as she recalled in her biography. Nevertheless, we should be reminded that her starting point was modern dance, which she learned for the first time in Japan. Along the way, she transformed herself and her art, creating hybrid dances of old and new techniques. Ch'oe was a dancer who featured border-crossing aesthetics that captivated Japanese intellectuals and cultural leaders who, after having suffered failures in the art movements of modernism, became more bound by the military discourses of nationalism as the Second

World War loomed.

Ch'oe, who lived through a tumultuous period and left a remarkable legacy to Korean art in modern times, created spaces in which to breathe through her dance, uplifting not only Japanese and Korean audiences but also other audiences. Isadora Duncan (1877–1927) said that the dancing body is a medium that transmits soul or spirit to an audience. When we watch ballet that transforms the stage into an alternative world, it seems to convey our prayers to heaven.

In Korea, “traditional dance” (*ch'um*) was a sincere prayer in which a spiritual messenger was engaged in connecting earth to heaven. But when “modern dance” (*muyong*) was introduced in Korea, it seemingly erased the cosmology that *ch'um* had cherished for so long. *Muyong* was declared to be an art that expressed the emotions of the dancer, in contrast to what *ch'um* represented in Korean culture. When Ch'oe began her dance career, she followed the cultural trajectory of *muyong* and tried to discard the legacy of *ch'um*.

As her career progressed, however, Ch'oe, steeped in the cultural traditions of Korea, began to return to her roots. The habitus of body and emotions could not easily be erased through denial or conscious effort. The turning point was her performance of *Ehaya noara*, a transition from her rejection of the Chosŏn dance that courtesans had preserved to her reconciliation of emotions and bodily movements associated with traditional Korea⁽²⁷⁾.

Ch'oe Sūnghŭi enjoyed much praise and support from many Japanese writers and cultural leaders. But her reputation in Korea suffered with the accusation that she was pro-Japanese, particularly when she began to perform more and more for the Japanese military. Eventually, because of this accusation, she was forced to leave Korea soon after she had returned to Seoul in 1945. Here the question of whether she was pro-Japanese or not is irrelevant. More pertinent is that she walked along the tightropes of Korean culture and Japanese culture, of modernity and imperialism, of ideology and ethnocentrism, and of colonialism and postcolonialism, all of them representing the pain associated with the transition from *ch'um* to *muyong* and then to a combination of them.

Notes

- (1) See Chŏng Pyŏngho, *Ch'umch'unŭn Ch'oe Sŭnghŭi: segye rŭl hwiŏjabŭn Chosŏn yŏja* (Seoul: Ppuri kipŭn namu, 1995).
- (2) Han Kyŏngja, "Ch'oe Sŭnghŭi yŏn'gu ŭi hyŏnhwang kwa kwaje," *Ch'eyuk sabakhoeji*, 17-1 (2012), p. 97.
- (3) For details, see Yuasa Katsue, *Bukiki: Sai Shōki no hansei* (Tokyo: Bunmeisha, 1947), pp. 22-24.
- (4) For example, Takashima Yūsaburō, *Sai Shōki* (Tokyo: Gakufū shoin, 1959); Kim Ch'anjŏng, *Honoo wa yami no kanata ni: densetsu no buki Sai Shōki* (Tokyo: Nihon hōsō shuppan kyōkai, 2002); and Nishiki Masaaki, *Sasurai no buki: Kita no yami ni kieta densetsu no bareri-na Sai Shōki* (Tokyo: Kōbunsha, 2010).
- (5) For example, see Judy Van Zile, *Perspectives on Korean Dance* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2001); Emily Wilcox, "Crossing Over: Choi Seunghae's Pan-Asianism in Revolutionary Time," *The Journal of Society for Dance Documentation and History* (forthcoming).
- (6) For details on Ishii's performance in Kyŏngsŏng, see Yi Chuhŭi, "Ilbon ŭi kŭndae muyongga Ishii Baku ŭi Chosŏn esŏi muyong hwaltong koch'al," *Muyong yesulhak yŏn'gu*, 42-3 (2013), pp. 81-98.
- (7) *Maeil Newspaper* (March 27, 1926).
- (8) His first dance performance in Korea took place in March 1926 and, thereafter, seventeen more times until the last one performed in July 1942. In his second performance in October 1927 Ch'oe Sŭnghŭi joined him and danced and, Cho T'aekwŏn, one of the audience at this time, was so impressed that he decided to learn dance under Ishii.
- (9) See Sin Myŏngjik, "Modŏn boi Kyŏngsŏng ŭl kŏnilda," *Hyŏnsil munhwa yŏn'gu* (2003), p. 21.
- (10) For the cultural role of Kyŏngsŏng Public Hall, see Yun Haedong and Hwang Pyŏngju, *Sikminji konggongsŏng: silch'e wa ŭnyu ŭi kŏri* (Seoul: Ch'aek kwa hamgye, 2010), pp. 54-55.
- (11) Yi Chin'a, "Sikminji Chosŏn ŭi sinmuyong kwa kŭndaejŏk yesul kaenyŏm ŭi suyong," *Sahoe wa yŏksa*, 112 (2016), p. 201.
- (12) Yu Mihŭi, *20-segi majimak p'eminsŭtŭ* (Seoul: Minsokwŏn, 2006), p. 13.
- (13) Ishii Kan, *Buyŏ shijin Ishii Baku* (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1994), p. 232.

- (14) For details, see Yi Sanggil, “1902–1930 nyöndaek Kyöngsöng üi midio konggan kwa int’elligench’ia: Ch’oe Süng’il üui kyöng’u,” *Önron chöngbo yön’gu* 47 (1) (2010), pp. 124–125.
- (15) In Japan, similar examples were found in Miyazawa Genji and Nakahara Juya who left a number of well-known poems about their sisters.
- (16) Yi Sanggil, p. 126.
- (17) Yi Sanggil, p. 154.
- (18) For more details, see Yi Sanggil, pp. 157–162.
- (19) Ra Kiju, “Haebang kwa pundan üi konggan e na’anan yesulgatül üi inyömchök haengbo: An Mak üi munhak kwa yesul ül chungsim üro, *Han’guk munye pip’yöng yön’gu* 34 (2011), p. 408; Cho Misuk, “1930 nyöndaek An Mak üi pip’yöng yön’gu: Marük’üsizüm üi hwakin kwa Polsyebik’ihwa üi chaköp,” *Sunch’önyhang immun kwahak nonch’ong* 27 (2010), p. 38.
- (20) Ra Kiju, p. 412; Cho Misuk, p. 48.
- (21) Ra Kiju, p. 413; Cho Misuk, p. 41.
- (22) See Pak Sangmi, *Teikoku to sengo no bunka seisaku: butai no ue no Nihonzō* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2017), pp. 45–47.
- (23) Yi Chöngno, “1930 nyöndaek Chosön muyong üi yangsikchök t’üksöng e kwanhan yön’gu: Ch’oe Süng’hüi üi chakp’um ül chungsim üro, *Minjok mihak* 14 (2) (2015), pp. 78–82; Chöng Pyönggho, p. 80.
- (24) Quote from Chöng Pyönggho, p. 148.
- (25) Judy Van Zile, p. 189.
- (26) Kim Talsu, 初出『グラフィケーション』一九七七年七月号
- (27) See Yi Chöngno, pp. 76–79.

Works cited

Cho Misuk 조미숙, “1930 nyöndaek An Mak üi pip’yöng yön’gu: Marük’üsizüm üi hwakin kwa Polsyebik’ihwa üi chaköp” 1930 년대 안막의 비평연구: 마르크시즘의 확인과 불세 비키화의 작업, *Sunch’önyhang immun kwahak nonch’ong* 순천향 인문과학논총 27 (2010).

Chöng Pyönggho 정병호, *Ch’umch’unün Ch’oe Süng’hüi: segye rül hwiöjabün Chosön yöja* 춤추

- 는 최승희 : 세계를 휘어잡은 조선여자 (Seoul: Ppuri kipún namu, 1995).
- Han Kyôngja 한경자, “Ch’oe Sünghüi yôn’gu üi hyönhwang kwa kwaje” 최승희 연구의 현황과 과제, *Ch’eyuk sabakboejí* 체육사학회지 17-1 (2012).
- Ishii Kan 石井歓, *Buyô shijin Ishii Baku* 舞踊詩人石井巖 (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1994).
- Kim Ch’anjöng 金贊汀, *Honoo wa yami no Kanata ni: densetsu no buki Sai Shôki* 炎は闇の彼方に : 伝説の舞姫・崔承喜 (Tokyo: Nihon hōshō shuppan kyōkai, 2002).
- Nishiki Masaaki 西木正明, *Sasurai no buki: Kita no yami ni kieta densetsu no bareri-na Sai Shôki* さすらいの舞姫 : 北の闇に消えた伝説のバレリーナ・崔承喜 (Tokyo: Kōbunsha, 2010).
- Pak Sangmi 朴祥美, *Teikoku to sengo no bunka seisaku: butai no ue no Nihonzō* 帝国と戦後の文化政策 : 舞台の上の日本像 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2017).
- Ra Kiju 라기주, “Haebang kwa pundan üi konggan e na’anan yesulgatül üi inyömhökh haengbo: An Mak üi munhak kwa yesul ül chungsim üro” 해방과 분단의 공간에 나타난 예술가들의 이념적 행보 : 안막의 문학과 삶을 중심으로, *Han’guk munye pip’yöng yôn’gu* 한국문예비평연구 34 (2011).
- Sin Myöngjik 신명직, “Modön boi Kyöngsöng ül könilda” 모던보이 경성을 거닐다, *Hyönsil munhwa yôn’gu* 현실문화연구 (2003).
- Takashima Yūsaburō 高嶋雄三郎, *Sai Shôki* 崔承喜 (Tokyo: Gakufū shoin, 1959).
- Van Zile, Judy. *Perspectives on Korean Dance* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2001)
- Yi Chin’a 이진아, “Sikminji Chosön üi sinmuyong kwa kündaejök yesul kaenyöm üi suyong” 식민지 조선의 신무용과 근대적 예술개념의 수용, *Saboe wa yöksa* 사회와 역사 112 (2016).
- Yi Chöngno 이정노, “1930 nyöndae Chosön muyong üi yangsikchök t’üksöng e kwanhan yôn’gu: Ch’oe Sünghüi üi chakp’um ül chungsim üro” 1930년대 조선무용의 양식적 특성에 관한 연구 : 최승희의 작품을 중심으로, *Minjok mihak* 민족미학 14 (2) (2015).
- Yi Chuhüi 이주희, “Ilbon üi kündae muyongga Ishii Baku üi Chosön esöüi muyong hwal-tong koch’al” 일본의 근대무용가 이시이 바쿠의 조선에서의 무용활동 고찰, *Muyong yesulhak yôn’gu* 무용예술학연구 42-3 (2013).
- Yi Sanggil 이상길, “1902-1930 nyöndae Kyöngsöng üi midiö konggan kwa int’elligench’ia: Ch’oe Sünghüi üi kyöng’u” 1920-1930년대 경성의 미디어 공간과 인텔리겐치아 : 최승일의 경우, *Önron chöngbo yôn’gu* 언론정보연구 47 (1) (2010).
- Yuasa Katsue 湯浅克衛, *Bukiki: Sai Shôki no hansei* 舞姫記 : 崔承喜の半生 (Tokyo: Bunmei-

sha, 1947).

Yu Mihŭi 유미희, *20-segi majimak p'eminisŭtŭ* 20세기 마지막 페미니스트 (Seoul: Min-sokwŏn, 2006).

Yun Haedong 윤해동 and Hwang Pyŏngju 황병주, *Sikminji konggongsŏng: silch'e wa ūnyu ūi kŏri* 식민지 공공성 : 실체와 은유의 거리 (Seoul: Ch'aek kwa hamgye, 2010).

This work was supported by the Core University Program for Korean Studies through the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea and Korean Studies Promotion Service of the Academy of Korean Studies (AKS-2016-OLU-2250001).