

Crossing Over: Choe Seung-hui's Pan-Asianism in Revolutionary Time

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Past English-language scholarship on Choe Seung-hui has focused on her world tour of 1938-1940 and her work in Japan and Japanese-occupied Korea prior to 1945. Choe's contributions to dance creation in the socialist world have been largely ignored. This essay expands on the existing scholarship by using Chinese-language source materials to examine Choe's career in China and its implications for the connections between the pre- and post-1945 periods of Choe's career. This essay documents three important parts of Choe's work in China: her development of China-themed choreography, her adaptation of new dance forms from Chinese opera, and her training of the first generation of Chinese dance professionals. I argue that Choe's work in China was continuous despite changes in political context. The project that she began in the 1940s as part of the pan-Asianist project of Oriental Dance later transformed by the 1950s into Chinese classical dance under socialist internationalism.

<Keywords> Choe Seung-hui (Choi Seunghee), Oriental Dance, Chinese Classical Dance, Pan-Asianism, Socialist Internationalism

I . Introduction

Since taboos on the study of Choe Seung-hui 최승희 / 崔承喜 (also written Ch'oe Sŭnghŭi or Choi Seunghee; in Japanese Sai Shoki; in Chinese as Cui Chengxi, 1911–1969) were lifted in South and North Korea in the 1990s, Anglophone researchers have joined a growing group of international scholars contributing to new understandings of the life and career of this influential Korean dancer, choreographer, researcher, and pedagogue. While the transnational and intercultural dimensions of Choe's work have received significant attention in the emerging body of scholarship, Anglophone scholars have tended to examine these themes within the context of the pre-1945 Japanese imperial period, rather than after Choe's move in 1946 to North Korea (later the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, est. 1948). Choe's performances in the United States, Europe, and Latin America during her world tour of 1938–1940 have understandably received special attention from Anglophone scholars, as has the expression of colonialism, imperialism, modernity, and pan-Asianism in Choe's early work in Japan and colonial Korea (Van Zile 2001; Park 2004; Kim 2006; Atkins 2010; Van Zile 2013; Kleeman 2014; Romero Castilla 2017). By comparison, Choe's work in Japanese-occupied China between 1941 and 1945 and the more than two decades Choe spent developing dance in North Korea and China from 1946 to the late 1960s has only recently begun to receive attention in English-language research (Kim 2017; Wilcox 2019; Wilcox forthcoming).

Using Chinese-language historical sources, I argue that there are significant continuities between the Japanese imperial and socialist phases of Choe's career. After her move to North Korea in 1946, Choe continued to travel widely as she had in the earlier years, touring her dances abroad, participating and judging in international dance competitions, creating work with diverse cultural influences, and collaborating with artists in other countries (Won 2008; Gu 1951; Du and Yang 1958; Kim 2017). Choe's movements after 1946 followed new political networks, with the transnational circuits of Japanese imperialism largely replaced by those of socialist internationalism. Despite these changes in political context and geography, however, the substance of Choe's artistic activities remained in many ways consistent over time. One project in particular

that continued across the 1946 divide was Choe's effort to create a new concert dance style on the basis of Chinese theater. During the Japanese imperial period, Choe began this project under the label of "Oriental Dance" (also translated "Eastern Dance"; in Korean *Tongyang muyong* 동양 무용; in Japanese *Tōyō buyō* 東洋舞踊; in Chinese *Dongfang wudao* 東方舞蹈), a name that connected it to the imperialist ideology of pan-Asianism. After the fall of the Japanese empire, Choe did not abandon this work simply because the political context of Japanese imperialism had disappeared. Rather, she reframed it to suit the new context of socialist internationalism. Thus, I suggest that Choe's dance-based articulations of pan-Asianism, rather than ending with the demise of the Japanese empire, outlived the political circumstances in which they had initially taken shape. In this way, Choe's pan-Asianism "crossed over" the 1945 political divide and found new life and new meanings in the socialist revolutionary age.

II. Sources and Methodology

This study examines the continuity in Choe's dance activities between the Japanese imperial era and her post-1946 work in North Korea by examining her international career in China, which spanned these two periods. Choe's contributions to dance in China are well documented in the Chinese-language sources, including periodicals and books published while Choe was in China during the 1940s and early 1950s and retrospective accounts published since the early 2000s. Here, I draw on all of these available Chinese-language materials, which I have accessed through digital Chinese periodical databases, library collections in China and the United States, and more than ten years of field research among professional dancers in China. In addition to reading published documents and examining audiovisual recordings and photographs, I also conducted oral history interviews with several prominent Chinese dancers who personally studied with Choe when she taught at China's Central Academy of Drama in Beijing during the early 1950s. Most previous Anglophone scholars writing on Choe have examined her work through the lens of Japanese, Korean, or Western-language sources. Chinese-language materials thus represent a new perspective from which to

understand and interpret Choe's transnational dance career. They help illuminate the ways in which this creative, intelligent, and ambitious artist carved out space for her own creative agendas in divergent political contexts and how she forged lasting professional relationships that transcended boundaries of time and space.

Choe's dance activities in China examined here lasted just over a decade, from 1941 until 1952. Not only did they cross the 1945 political watershed but were roughly equally divided between two periods—the first structured by Japanese imperialism and lasting roughly from 1941 to 1945 and the second structured by international socialism and lasting roughly from 1946 to 1952. Over the course of these twelve years, relations between China, Korea, and Japan underwent profound changes, shaped by tumultuous events such as the Second Sino-Japanese War, the early Cold War, and the Korean War. These events had consequences for China's and Korea's artistic spheres and Choe's role in them. For example, Choe's tours in China during the Sino-Japanese War led her to encounter Chinese theatrical practices and form friendships with Chinese performance artists, while the needs of North Korean nation-building presented new professional opportunities to translate her ongoing projects in a new political context, and the Korean War brought Choe once again back to China to continue her earlier work. What is astonishing is the relative constancy that can be observed in Choe's artistic activities in China amidst these profound sociopolitical shifts and her own growth as a dance artist during these years. Throughout her time working in China, Choe collaborated with roughly the same group of Chinese theater practitioners, represented most notably by the world famous Peking opera (Jingju 京劇) star Mei Lanfang 梅蘭芳 (1894–1961). In cooperation with Mei and others, Choe worked to analyze and extract bodily movements used in various forms of Chinese opera (*xiqu* 戲曲, also known as Chinese indigenous theater) and use them as the basis for a new dance form, what became known as Chinese classical dance (*Zhongguo gudianwu* 中國古典舞). It was not until the mid-1950s that Chinese classical dance emerged as a fully formed dance style under the patronage of the new Chinese socialist state (Wilcox 2019). Nevertheless, I show that this style was a direct continuation of the earlier project of Oriental Dance that Choe had begun in the context of pan-Asianist ideology during the Japanese imperial era.

Because Choe's work in China followed a consistent program with a clear progression over the years from 1941 to 1952, I focus my study on this historical timeframe. Employing this approach challenges the conventional periodization of modern Chinese history, which regards the year 1949 as a fundamental break between two politically divergent eras: the Republic of China (ROC) from 1912 to 1949 and the People's Republic of China (PRC) from 1949 to the present. From an institutional perspective, there were important differences between Choe's work before and after the establishment of the PRC in 1949. For example, Choe's collaborations with Chinese performing artists and her establishment of dance institutions in China before 1949 appear to have been private enterprises whose connection to Japanese government institutions was not totally clear, while her parallel activities in China after 1949 were conducted as official activities sponsored by the Chinese Ministry of Culture and ultimately based in China's state-sponsored national conservatory, the Central Academy of Drama. By placing these activities side-by-side and documenting the historical links between them, I aim to show not only how dance projects begun under the imperial ideology of pan-Asianism were adapted to the new ideology of socialist internationalism, but also how private activities and person-to-person friendships seeded during the imperial period laid the groundwork for public culture initiatives and state-to-state diplomatic activities that flowered during the Korean War under the early years of Sino-North Korean cultural exchange. Choe's career in China over the period from 1941 to 1952 thus offers a lens for exploring larger questions in dance studies, modern Chinese history, and the origins of transnational socialist culture in East Asia and beyond.

III. The Early China Tours, 1941-1943

Choe's first visits to China were a series of performance tours she made in the early 1940s, during which she visited the Japanese-controlled puppet state of Manchuria and major cities along China's eastern seaboard that had come under Japanese occupation since the start of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937. Following Choe's return to Japan after her world tour to Europe and North and South America in early December

1940, Choe conducted three successive tours of East Asia that brought her to China—the first in 1941, the second in 1942, and the third in 1943 (Figure 1). In a 2005 essay published in the *Journal of the Beijing Dance Academy*, China's leading dance studies journal, Yanbian-based Korean-Chinese scholar Li Aishun summarizes these three early tours as follows:



Figure 1. Advertisement for Choe Seung-hui's performances in China in 1943. Published in *Women's Voice 女聲*, Vol. 2, No. 6, page 2. Reproduction provided by the Chinese Periodical Full-text Database (1911–1949), *Quan Guo Bao Kan Suo Yin (CNBKSY)*, Shanghai Library.

“From April to November 1941, Choe Seung-hui carried out more than a hundred shows during a performance tour through Korea, China, and Japan. Starting in February 1942, she again performed as many as 130 shows in Korea and in China's Northeast (*Dongbei* 東北) and North China (*Huabei* 華北) territories. Among these, her performances in Beijing and Tianjin alone added up to 18 [...] On August 12, 1943, Choe and her husband travelled in a group of fourteen people and four students including 針田陽子 and set out from Dandong, China, travelling to Wushun, Fengtian (Shenyang), Dalian, Jilin, Xinjing (Changchun), Harbin, Qiqihar, Bei'an, Jiamusi, Mudanjiang, Tumen, etc., carrying out her third tour of China. After they arrived in Nanjing on September 4th, they then carried out over a month of performances in Nanjing and Shanghai. Then, they took a roundabout course and arrived in Tianjin.” (Li 2005).¹⁾

According to Li, Choe received highly positive receptions from Chinese audiences during these tours. “Choe's performances in China were just like her performances in Paris, New York, and other Euro-American cities, receiving feverishly enthusiastic responses from audiences,” Li writes (17). Other scholars have noted that apart from performing for local Chinese audiences, Choe also performed shows for the

1) Li does not provide sources to document the exact dates, locations, and other information provided in this description. However, Li's account roughly matches other published timelines of Choe's life. See Takashima and Chong (1994: 217–218). Li cites Takashima's 1981 biography of Choe later in her essay. All translations from Chinese are my own.

entertainment of Japanese soldiers during these visits (Park 2004: 622–624; Won 2008; Atkins 2010: 169). This suggests that as for the vast majority of artists working in Japan or Japanese-occupied locations during this period, Choe’s artistry was intertwined in direct and indirect ways with Japan’s imperialist politics.

It was during these shows in Japanese-controlled parts of China from 1941 to 1943, some of which were performances for Japanese soldiers, that Choe began to create, perform, and promote what she called “Oriental Dance”: a pan-East Asian dance repertoire that self-consciously adapted material from Chinese, Japanese, and Korean sources. This new repertoire built on Choe’s past experience in intercultural dance but marked an important departure from her earlier works in both their style and content. The existing scholarship on Choe’s dance activities prior to 1940 suggest that she began her career performing Japanese interpretations of Western dance, including a combination of elements drawn from ballet, early European and American modern dance, and revue-style commercial dance (Takashima and Chong 1994; Van Zile 2013). Starting in 1934, Choe began to stage new choreography that took inspiration from diverse Korean cultural sources, such as the performances of peasants, *kisaeng*, and shamans, characters from traditional Korean masked dance-drama, and dances portraying, sometimes in a satirical way, Korean elites, monks, and generals. Because of their creative approach to Korean material, these dances were known in Korean as “*shinmuyong*” 新舞踊, meaning “new dance” (Lee 1997: 95–102). The repertoire Choe performed during her world tour of 1938–40 emphasized her *shinmuyong* choreography on Korean themes, together with additional pieces that used South and Southeast Asian imagery or took inspiration from Buddhist art, some similar in style to earlier orientalist dances by American modern dancer Ruth St. Denis.²⁾ During the early 1940s, Japan’s wartime ideology took a new turn with the Imperial Subject Movement and promotion of the “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere,” which advocated pan-Asianism over individual national identities. In this tense political environment, it became politically dangerous for Choe to continue to focus on Korean subject material as she had done

2) For a detailed account of the works Choe performed when she visited the United States, see Van Zile (2001), especially the appendix. On comparisons between Choe and St. Denis, see Van Zile (2013).

previously since the mid-1930s. It thus became politically necessary for Choe to create and perform dances on a broader range of themes, especially those representing China and Japan, which had not been part of her earlier choreography. It was this new context that propelled Choe's pursuit of Oriental Dance as a pan-East Asian dance repertoire (Kleeman 2014: 200, 204–205).

Journalistic accounts of Choe's tours in Beijing, Shanghai, and other major Chinese cities in the years 1942 and 1943 show that Choe was already performing items from her new Oriental Dance repertoire on these tours. In 1942, the magazine *369 Pictorial* published a short article on Choe's tour in Beijing, stating that Choe had been invited by the North China Performing Arts Association (*Huabei yanyi xiehui* 華北演藝協會) and that her visit was highly anticipated by the local arts community ("Gewujia" 1942). The next issue of the magazine included a blurry stage photograph showing Choe dancing in a light-colored Chinese-style robe with a dark sash down the middle, scalloped hip panels with a dark rim, long flowing sleeves, and a headdress with a circular pendant on the forehead (Figure 2).

In the photograph, Choe appears to be stepping forward on her left foot with her head slightly tilted to the left and her hands tossing her long sleeves back over her right shoulder ("Riben zhuming" 1942). Although the name of the dance is not given, the costume and body position match photographs identified elsewhere as *Consort's Song* 明妃曲, a Chinese-themed piece inspired by the story of Wang Zhaojun 王昭君, a Chinese woman who lived in the first century BCE and has been a frequent subject in Chinese literature (Liu 1943: 28; Takashima and Chong 1994: 121–122; Gu 1951: 95). In 1943, *Pacific Weekly* published a complete list of the thirty-six dances Choe performed



Figure 2. Photograph of Choe Seung-hui performing in China in 1942. Published in *San liu jiu huabao* 三六九畫報 Vol. 16, No. 2, page 17. Reproduction provided by the Chinese Periodical Full-text Database (1911–1949), Quan Guo Bao Kan Suo Yin (CNBKS), Shanghai Library.

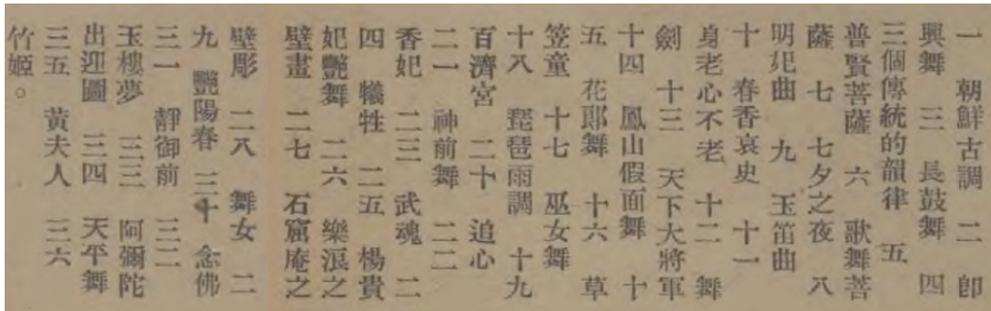


Figure 3. List of Choe Seung-hui's thirty-six dances performed in Shanghai in 1943. Published in *Taipingyang zhoubao* 太平洋周報 Vol. 1, No. 84, page 1853. Reproduction provided by the Chinese Periodical Full-text Database (1911-1949), Quan Guo Bao Kan Suo Yin (CNBKSY), Shanghai Library.

in Shanghai during her tour that year, and it confirms that *Consort's Song* was one of at least three works on Chinese themes included in that program, along with *Fragrant Consort* 香妃 and *Dance of Yang Guifei* 楊貴妃艷舞 (“Chongyi” 1943) (Figure 3). Apart from Chinese-themed dances, the program also featured several pieces inspired by Japanese material. These included *Song and Dance Buddha* 歌舞菩薩, inspired by a Japanese painting from the Kamakura period (1185-1333) titled *Arrival of the 25 Bodhisattva* 二十五菩薩來迎圖 that depicts bodhisattvas in the clouds playing musical instruments; *Samantabhadra Bodhisattva* 普賢菩薩, based on a Japanese painting from the Heian period (794-1185); and *Chasing the Heart* 追心, *Dance Before a God* 神前舞, and *Martial Spirit* 武魂, all of which were adapted from Japanese Noh dramas.³⁾ During this time, the Chinese press often cited a poetic description of Choe's dance program that emphasized her blending of Chinese, Japanese and Korean components. It stated, “Choe's art is composed of the mixture of three elements: the colors of Japan, the forms of China, and the lines of Choson” (“Chongyi” 1943; “Dongyang” 1943).

Choe explained the provenance of her new pan-East Asian program and its connection to her new vision of Oriental Dance during a symposium held in Shanghai on October 23, 1943, a detailed transcript of which was published in the magazine *Miscellany* shortly afterward (“Cui Chengxi” 1943) (Figure 4). Many of her new works, Choe explained,

3) For the complete program, see “Chongyi” (1943). For descriptions of the works, see also Gu (1951: 94-99). For photographs of some of these works published in China, see Yi (1943).

were not based on historical precedents but were instead her own creations inspired by attending performances of Chinese and Japanese theater, listening to musical records, and collecting historical materials and photographs. Describing the making of *Consort's Song*, for example, she recounted, “I was watching Chinese theater, and from the performance I gathered some impressions, added my own abundant imagination, and created a new-form dance” (33). Choe admitted that her relatively superficial knowledge of Chinese art made her nervous about performing these new dances for Chinese audiences. However, she insisted that with more study and creative work, the movements and images of Chinese opera had the potential to serve as the basis for an exciting new dance form. Choe recalled, “When I was in Beijing [Beijing], I saw shows by famous Kunqu actor Han Shichang [韓世昌, 1897–1976]. I felt that many of the movements already were quite close to Western dance art. If we get rid of the excess and keep the essential, deleting some unnecessary scenes and spectacle, surely we can create a kind of new Chinese dance art from Chinese theater” (35).

Choe's idea seemed far-fetched to some of her Chinese interlocutors at the time. A Chinese musician who attended the symposium, for example, expressed skepticism about Choe's idea, stating “Eastern dance, generally speaking, is constructed with delicate, small movements... If we rely on those scattered small types of movements... is it really feasible to ‘create’ a complete dance artwork?” (35). Choe insisted that she felt that such a project was indeed possible, provided artists were committed to it. Speaking from her own experience, Choe explained, “Over the past 10 years, I've been putting great effort into this, taking what is good in the old heritage of Japan and Korea



Figure 4. Report on Choe Seung-hui Dance Symposium in Shanghai, 1943. Published in *Zazhi* 雜誌, Vol. 12, No. 2: 33–38. Reproduction provided by the Chinese Periodical Full-text Database (1911–1949), Quan Guo Bao Kan Suo Yin (CNBKSY), Shanghai Library.

and struggling to add new creation, making it become a new form of dance. China has youth who are committed to Chinese dance art. If they can work hard at this, why not open a new path, founding a new Chinese dance art?" (35). At the conclusion of the symposium, Choe made an impassioned call for Chinese youth to join her in working toward the realization of her proposal: "I fervently hope that this short performance will attract the interest of China's youthful men and women who are devoted to dance art and that they will take this opportunity to jointly establish an Oriental dance art. I hope that next time I come here, I will have new contributions to place before Chinese audiences" (38). In the symposium report, Choe is identified as a "Japanese dance expert," underscoring the imperialist cultural frame in which this event and Choe's proposals for Oriental Dance initially emerged.

IV. The Oriental Dance Research Institute, 1944-1946



Figure 5. Report on Choe Seung-hui's meeting with Mei Lanfang in Shanghai, 1943. Published in *Taipingyang zhoubao* 太平洋週報 Vol. 1, No. 93: 2102-2103. Reproduction provided by the Chinese Periodical Full-text Database (1911-1949), Quan Guo Bao Kan Suo Yin (CNBKSY), Shanghai Library.

Before Choe left China at the end of her 1943 tour, reports in Chinese magazines and newspapers give clues that Choe was befriending Chinese opera actors and preparing to return to China for a longer period to study Chinese opera performance and set up her own dance school. An account published in *Pacific Weekly* in early 1944, for instance, states that while Choe was performing in Shanghai in October 1943, she met with Mei Lanfang, at the time China's leading Chinese opera actor (Ao 1944) (Figure 5). Although the two artists came from different cultural backgrounds and worked in different performance genres, they had much in common. Like Choe, Mei had toured extensively abroad and commanded fame across East Asia.

Also, like Choe, Mei was known for innovating upon traditional performance styles (Goldstein 2007; Yeh 2017). During their conversation, Choe told Mei about her new dance portraying Yang Guifei, a role for which Mei himself was quite well known.⁴⁾ At the time of their meeting, Mei had stopped performing as an act of resistance against the Japanese occupation. However, during their conversation, Choe requested to study with Mei and expressed the hope of one day seeing him perform again. Choe also asked Mei about the training of artists in Chinese opera. After he reported on the situation, Mei offered to take Choe to visit a professional Chinese opera school in Shanghai where she could observe the training, and Choe enthusiastically agreed. According to another account, published in *369 Pictorial* in late 1943, just before Choe was about to leave Beijing to return to Tokyo at the end of her 1943 tour, Choe reportedly met with Bai Yuwei 白玉薇, an accomplished female Peking opera performer. During their conversation, Choe reportedly told Bai that “in the future [I] will come back to Beijing to establish a high-quality dance school” (“Liu guo” 1943: 22). Choe also added that she hoped Chinese opera practitioners would pay more attention to dance in the future, hinting at her plans to return and set up a dance research program for this purpose.

Following Choe's return to Tokyo at the end of 1943, Chinese periodicals continued to report on her activities researching and performing Chinese dance and her plans to return to China and begin teaching Chinese students. As reported in a 1944 article in *369 Pictorial*, Choe had staged a series of sold-out shows at the Tokyo Imperial theater from January 27th to February 15th in which she presented a further enlarged repertoire that included six works with Chinese themes. One of these pieces was titled *Farewell My Concubine* 霸王别姬, based on a well-known work of Peking opera in which Mei Lanfang famously portrayed the character of Yang Guifei. (Choe's earlier piece *Dance of Yang Guifei* was also included on this program.) Another newly added Chinese-themed choreography performed in the same program was *Autumn Moon in the Han Palace* 漢宮秋, based on a piece of classic Chinese music. Two others were *Lotus Steps* 蓮步 and *Zhen'e Vanquishes the Tiger* 真餓刺虎. For this show, Choe had

4) As a male actor specializing in female roles, Mei portrayed similar characters to the ones in Choe's Chinese-themed dances. One of Mei's most famous acts was “Drunken Beauty” 貴妃醉酒, depicting the character of Yang Guifei.

reportedly sought out a Chinese music ensemble led by Chen Lingxiu, a Chinese writer studying in Tokyo, to provide the musical accompaniment. According to the article, Choe was already making plans to return to give performances in China in August or September of that year, for audiences in Beijing, Tianjin, and Qingdao (“Liu Ri” 1944). Around this same time, *China Weekly* reported that Choe was still studying in Japan but that she “has a hope that will likely be realized next spring... to bring in some Chinese students” (“Zuji” 1944: 22). This same writer added that Choe was also planning to collect more materials in China for further dance creation, with the goal “to create a most contemporary, most ideal expression of the beauty of Oriental spiritual beauty (*Dongfang jingshen mei* 東方精神美)” (22). Another article published in 1944 in *Literary Pictorial* announced that Choe “will soon publicly set up an institute and offer instruction” (Gu 1944: 3).



Figure 6. Cover of Chinese-language book on Choe Seung-hui published by Gu Yewen in Shanghai in 1951. Photograph from author's collection.

These years of anticipation and preparation finally came to fruition in Choe's establishment of the Oriental Dance Research Institute (*Dongfang wuyong yanjiusuo* 東方舞踊研究所⁵⁾), the first of two dance training programs she would lead in Beijing during her career. Accounts vary on the exact year the Oriental Dance Research Institute was founded. In his well-researched Chinese-language book on Choe's career published in 1951, Gu Yewen dates the founding of the Institute to 1944, and this is the date also used by the contemporary scholar Li Aishun cited above (Gu 1951: 12; Li 2005: 18) (Figure 6). However, the earliest Chinese-language sources I have been able to locate that mention the Institute

5) Sources are inconsistent about the exact name of the institute. Chinese accounts published in 1945 tend to use “wuyong” 舞踊, a term for dance that has elitist and Japanese associations. Later Chinese publications, including those in the early 1950s, replace “wuyong” with “wudao” 舞蹈, so the name becomes “Dongfang wudao yanjiusuo” 東方舞蹈研究所. Both can be translated as Oriental Dance Research Institute.

as an already established institution date to 1945. One article, published in the Shanghai-based magazine *Miscellany* in 1945, states, “This year [Choe] established a dance research institute in Beiping [Beijing] to teach Chinese students, with the goal of shouldering the responsibility of the rebirth of Oriental dance art” (Luo 1945: 85). According to this source, Choe discussed the Institute during meetings she held in Shanghai with Mei Lanfang on March 31st and with a group of women writers on April 9th. Thus, it is clear that at the Institute was already established and in operation at least by the spring of 1945. These dates also place the establishment of the Institute firmly within the Japanese occupation era. According to Gu, Choe’s Oriental Dance Research Institute had been located near Beihai 北海, in central Beijing (12).

The main thrust of Choe’s work during these years, as reported in several Chinese-language articles published in 1945, was to establish a close connection between the Oriental Dance Research Institute and the intensification of Choe’s relationships with Mei Lanfang and other opera actors, as well as her own personal study of Chinese opera performance. During a documented meeting in Shanghai on March 31st,



Figure 7. Choe Seung-hui and Mei Lanfang, no date. Reproduced with permission from the private collection of Siqintariha and the Pioneers of Chinese Dance Digital Archive, Asia Library, University of Michigan.

1945, Choe and Mei continued their conversations of two years earlier, and Mei now agreed to perform for Choe in costume in his home (Figure 7). The two also seemed to be seriously exploring the possibility of working together and using Choe’s Institute in Beijing as a hub for creating a new dance style developed on the basis of Chinese opera. The following is an excerpt of their discussion as reported in *Miscellany*:

“Choe Seung-hui: A part of Chinese dance still exists in Peking opera and Kunqu. However, it cannot yet constitute an independent branch of art. What does Mr. Mei think? I believe that within Chinese classical drama [such as Peking opera and Kunqu]

there is a great deal of rich and elegant dance materials. If one used this as a foundation and created a new Chinese dance art [on its basis], it would certainly be better than the dance art of Western ballet. However, without Mei's efforts, it would be difficult for others to achieve this.

Mei Lanfang: In the past, I too had many aspirations to experiment. However, because of the restrictions of tradition, Peking opera must be sung, and dance could not become independent [from singing]. Regardless though, I think this can be done, although of course there will be many challenges. If Ms. Choe takes the creation of Oriental Dance (*Dongfang wuyong* 東方舞踊) as her own mission, I hope that by employing Chinese materials it will certainly be possible to succeed." (Luo 1945: 85-86).

Following this exchange, the two went on to discuss their own specific approaches to creation and performance, and Mei expressed his strong endorsement for Choe's artistic accomplishments. According to the report, Mei encouraged Choe to train more students so that in the future it might be possible to stage large-scale narrative dances similar to European ballets using the dance styles she had created. In response, Choe explained that this was indeed her intention in setting up the Oriental Dance Research Institute in Beijing. Outlining the Institute's purpose, Choe stated, "By teaching my foundational dance methods and experience to Chinese disciples, what I really want to do is to establish a new Chinese dance (*xin Zhongguo zhi wuyong* 新中國之舞踊), with the ultimate hope being Eastern ballet (*Dongyang de balei* 東洋的芭蕾舞)" (86). Mei apparently endorsed this idea, since he reportedly replied, "It is truly fortunate to have a research institute in Beijing [Beijing] set up by such a world talent as Ms. Choe" (86). Shortly after this meeting, a journalist writing for *New Century* found a bouquet from Mei in Choe's guest room, and Choe told the reporter that she had met with Mei several times and "hoped to frequently study with him" ("Cui Chengxi yi ge" 1945: 29).

Mei was not the only Chinese actor Choe sought out for tutelage and guidance while she was in China developing the program for her Oriental Dance Research Institute in 1945. That year, an article published in *Literary Pictorial* reported that a number of famous Peking opera actors had offered their "sincere criticisms" regarding Choe's

performances, among them Shang Xiaoyun 尚小雲 (1900–1976), Ma Lianliang 馬連良 (1901–1966) Li Wanchun 李萬春 (1911–1985), Xun Huisheng 荀慧生 (1900–1968), and Xi Xiaobo 奚嘯伯 (1910–1977) (“Cui Chengxi nicong” 1945). According to the same article, Shang Xiaoyun had already taught Choe a well-known Peking opera technique, the so-called “taking shelter from rain sliding step” 避雨滑步 performed by the character Meng Yuehua in the classic drama *Yubei Pavilion* 御碑亭. Shang also reportedly planned that next time Choe came to study with him, he would teach her the *qianghua* 槍花, a virtuoso acrobatic technique using the spear. Two photographs published in 369



Figure 8. Choe Seung-hui performing with Ye Shenglan in 1945. Published in *San liu jiu huabao* 三六九畫報 Vol. 31, No. 2, cover. Reproduction provided by the Chinese Periodical Full-text Database (1911–1949), *Quan Guo Bao Kan Suo Yin* (CNBKSY), Shanghai Library.

Pictorial provide visual evidence of Choe's work with opera actors during this time. In one, Choe appears seated next to the Peking opera female-role actor Zhang Junqiu 張君秋 (1920–1997) (“Cui Chengxi nüshi” 1945). In another, Choe appears standing next to a famous young male role Peking opera actor Ye Shenglan 葉盛蘭 (1914–1978) (“Riben wuyongjia” 1945) (Figure 8). In the latter photograph, which appeared on the magazine's cover, both Choe and Ye are dressed in full Peking opera costumes, and the caption suggests it depicts them performing together in a rendition of the Peking opera work *The Strange Double Reunion* (*Qi shuang hui* 奇雙會). In the photograph, both Choe and Ye wear elaborately embroidered floor-length garments, and their hands are held clasped together under cascading white silk sleeves. Two long braids hang down from Choe's bejeweled and tufted headdress, and she glances sideways with her forehead tilted slightly to one side, a demure smile on her lips. If not for the caption and Choe's recognizable face, one might mistake this for a typical photograph of two Chinese opera actors. In 1946, the magazine *Shanghai Tide* printed another photograph showing Choe performing with Peking opera actor Ma Lianliang (“Cui Chengxi zuo”).

Although Choe was devoted to the study of Chinese opera and expressed her desire to create from it a new form of Chinese dance, she continued to describe her exploration of Chinese dance as just one part of her overall mission to create the pan-East Asian dance genre of Oriental Dance. Japan's imperialist ideology of pan-Asianism included an explicit aim to make Asia capable of competing culturally and politically with the colonialist Western powers (Saaler and Szpilman 2011). Thus, one way in which Choe's discourses about Oriental Dance aligned with pan-Asianism was by positioning Oriental Dance in competition with European ballet, a leading Western concert dance form. In her meeting with Mei Lanfang on May 31, 1945, for example, Choe stated, "I think if a new Chinese dance form were created on the basis of Chinese opera, it would be better than Western ballet" (Luo 1945: 85). In a meeting with a group of female writers held in Shanghai on April 9th, 1945, Choe elaborated on this idea further and directly connected it with the aims of the Oriental Dance Research Institute. She stated,

"I hope to broadly promote Oriental dance art. So, in Beiping [Beijing] I set up a dance research institute. I don't dare to hope to become the director of Oriental art. However, I hope to become a bridge between the dance arts of the various nationalities, making Chinese and Japanese dance art blend together into a dance art that is unique to the Orient. Russian ballet and German ballet can represent European culture. However, in the Orient, although China has Chinese form dance, Japan has Japanese indigenous dance, and Choson [Korea] has Choson [Korean] dance, there is still no one kind of dance art that can represent the Orient as a whole. So, I hope to produce through research a kind of representative dance." (Luo 1945: 86).

Choe made clear in these discussions that she regarded Chinese artists as essential collaborators in her work at the Oriental Dance Research Institute. She also confirmed that she saw Chinese dance as just one part of Oriental Dance, which encompassed dances from all of East Asia. According to her public statements recorded in the Chinese press, Choe's ultimate goal in establishing the Institute and creating dance from Chinese opera was thus to achieve the pan-Asianist project of creating Oriental Dance,

so that East Asia would have a concert dance form of its own to rival concert dance forms such as ballet in the Western world.

V. From North Korea Back to Beijing, 1949-1952

After the Japanese surrender in late summer of 1945, Choe remained in China for several months, before she travelled back to Seoul and then eventually made her way to Pyongyang in the spring of 1946 (“Cui Chengxi zuo” 1946; Jituoweiqi 1949). From 1946 to 1949, Choe did not return to China, and for a time she became the butt of sharp criticisms in some parts of the Chinese press. An article published in 1946 in a Shanghai weekly, for example, described Choe’s occupation-era collaborations with Mei Lanfang as deceitful trickery, and it even went so far as to compare Choe’s interactions with Mei to Japanese soldiers’ abuses of the Chinese people during the war (Yu 1946). By the late 1940s, however, this assessment gradually changed, especially as deeper connections developed between the leftist dance movement then emerging in China and Choe’s dance activities in North Korea. Soon after she arrived in Pyongyang, Choe was appointed head of her own dance school, which became the leading institution for dance training in North Korea (Gu 1951; Won 2008; Kim 2017). In addition to Korean students, some Chinese students also attended this school. One of these Chinese students was Chen Jinqing 陳錦清 (1921–1991), who would study at Choe’s school in Pyongyang in 1948 (Dong and Long 2008: 731). Then already an influential figure in China’s communist arts movement, Chen would later become a leader in the dance field in the early People’s Republic of China, serving as founding Vice Director of China’s first national dance ensemble and founding Vice Principal of the Beijing Dance School (Wilcox 2019). Jiang Zuhui 蔣祖慧 (b. 1934), the daughter of famed Chinese writer Ding Ling and later herself an influential dancer, choreographer, and Vice Director of the Central Ballet of China, studied with Choe in Pyongyang in 1949 (Dong and Long 2008: 528). Likely informed by these exchanges and other cultural traffic between leftist groups in China and North Korea, a positive narrative about Choe reappeared in Chinese writings in the late 1940s. This suggested Choe was transcending her earlier association with the



Figure 9. Positive report on Choe Seung-hui in Chinese press in 1948. Published in *New China Pictorial* 新中國畫報, No. 12, page 15. Reproduction provided by the Chinese Periodical Full-text Database (1911–1949), Quan Guo Bao Kan Suo Yin (CNBKSY), Shanghai Library.

Japanese occupation and emerging as an icon of the new leftist dance culture in East Asia.

In 1948, an article published in *New China Pictorial* offers an example of this positive reassessment of Choe in the Chinese press (Figure 9). Under the article headline, a tagline printed in large block font reads, “Choi’s artistic life blossomed in the era of ‘Greater East Asia.’ Yet, the political stink of ‘Greater East Asia’ did not snuff out the fragrance of her art. Her comprehensive creation of Oriental Dance was, in the final analysis, a great path toward overturning the peerless status of Western cultural life in the world dance scene” (“Cui Chengxi de” 1948). From this statement, it is clear that the author aims

not only to salvage Choe’s artistic reputation but also to reclaim some aspects of her earlier dance projects and their ideological significance. Specifically, Choe’s pan-Asianist project of Oriental Dance is celebrated here for its anti-imperialist potential, which still has meaning in the leftist internationalist discourse of the revolutionary era. By the end of the article, it is evident that the author once again anticipates Choe’s return to China and her continued contributions to China’s dance field. The author writes, “After the victory [over Japan], Choson was divided into north and south, and [Choe] went to dedicate herself to socialist ‘North Korea,’ to become an art hero. We hope that one day she will be able to truly freely travel and perform in every area of the Orient and for cultural creation ‘dedicate herself without limitations.’” This statement proved a harbinger of Choe’s immanent return to China and the new developments that would unfold there over the next several years.

Once the PRC was formally established under a communist-led government on October 1, 1949, it did not take long for Choe to return to Beijing. As reported in

People's Daily and *Guangming Daily*, two leading PRC newspapers, Choe's initial return occurred in December 1949. At that time, Choe attended the Asia Women's Conference in Beijing, and her North Korea-based dance company was invited to give a series of high profile shows in Beijing attended by top cultural leaders (Chen 1949; "Wenhua" 1949). Shortly after this visit, the eruption of the Korean War provided a new context for Choe to once again pursue a period of long-term work in China. In November 1950, Choe was invited back to Beijing, where she delivered high profile speeches on Sino-Korean friendship and the urgency of the anti-U.S. war effort (Zhu 1950). While appearing publicly in diplomatic events, Choe also used this opportunity to return to the dance activities she had begun in the mid-1940s. Working not far from the site of her former Oriental Dance Research Institute, Choe sought out old friends in the Chinese opera scene and started once again to work on the project of creating a new Chinese dance style on the basis of Chinese opera movement. Between November 1950 and February 1951, Choe collaborated with Peking opera actor Mei Lanfang and Kunqu actors Han Shichang and Bai Yunsheng in Beijing to document and analyze the basic movements used in the performance of various Chinese opera role types (*hangdang* 行當). Specifically, they worked on movement vocabularies of the "virtuous female" (*qingyi* 青衣) role, the "coquettish female" (*huadan* 花旦) role, and the "young scholar" (*xiaosheng* 小生) role, in addition to movements for stage properties such as the water sleeve (*shuixiu* 水袖) ("Guonei" 1951). In this new context discourses about Sino-North Korean collaboration in the Korean War, not the idea of "Greater East Asia," now provided the ideological support for Choe's cross-cultural artistic exchange and dance research. According to a report published in *People's Daily* during Choe's visit in 1950, Choe reportedly stated, "I want to create some dances to reflect the great unity between the Chinese and Korean countries and reflect the Chinese people's enthusiastic feeling in the Resist American Aid Korea (*Kang Mei yuan Chao* 抗美援朝) movement" (Bai 1950). Despite this change in political context and ideological discourse, the substance of Choe's artistic practice remained largely the same as it had been during the mid-1940s. She continued to perform her own work, train Chinese students, study with Chinese opera actors, and collaboratively research the movements of Chinese opera with the goal of creating new dance forms that could express East Asian culture,



Figure 10. Choe Seung-hui and students during the Choe Seung-hui Dance Research Course in Beijing in 1951–52. Reproduced with permission from the private collection of Siqintariha and the Pioneers of Chinese Dance Digital Archive, Asia Library, University of Michigan.

challenge the West, and transcend national boundaries.

The culmination of Choe’s decade-long activities in China began in January 1951, when China’s Ministry of Culture invited Choe to move her North Korean dance research institute from Pyongyang to Beijing (Tian and Li 2005: 284). This invitation was in part out of wartime necessity, since it came in the wake of news that US bombs had destroyed Choe’s Pyongyang institute and killed two of her students (Bai 1950). To facilitate Choe’s continued training of her own students from North Korea, as well as direct training of a newly recruited group of Chinese students, the Ministry set up a special program in Beijing called the Choe Seung-hui Dance Research Course

(*Cui Chengxi wudao yanjiu ban* 崔承喜舞蹈研究班) (“Zhengli” 1951) (Figure 10). This program would not only allow Choe to continue her own work on North Korean dance but also to have a deep and lasting impact on the development of Chinese dance. Based at China’s Central Academy of Drama, the Choe Seung-hui Dance Research Course placed Choe at the helm of a nation-wide effort to train the first generation of professional dancers in the PRC. In an article published in the *People’s Daily* on February 18th, 1951, Choe outlined her vision for what she called “The Future of Chinese Dance Art,” which doubled as an overview of the work she planned to carry out in the Choe Seung-hui Dance Research Course and her vision for the future of dance in China (Choe 1951) (Figure 11). The article explained Choe’s plan for “helping China’s dance world complete the work of organizing Chinese dance,” by designing a new movement system derived from Peking opera and Kunqu. In this essay, Choe articulates the distinction between “folk” (*minjian* 民間) and “classical” (*gudian* 古典)

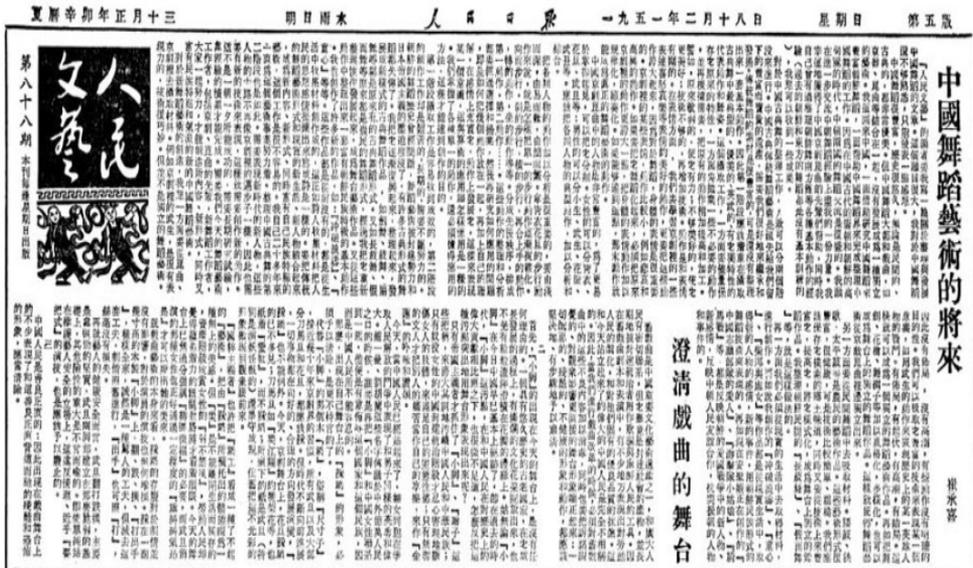


Figure 11. Choe Seung-hui's article "The Future of Chinese Dance Art," Published in *People's Daily* 人民日報, February 18, 1951. Reproduction provided by the People's Daily image and text database.

dances, which remains an organizing principle in Chinese dance to the present day (Wilcox 2011; Wilcox 2012). Additionally, she elaborates specific methods for pruning and expanding the existing movement forms in Chinese opera, with the goal of developing a training method for Chinese dancers that would be grounded in Chinese opera movement. This process eventually led to the Chinese classical dance training curriculum, a system developed under the leadership of Choe's students that continues to be used in China and many areas of the Sinophone world today (Wilcox 2019).

The significance of Choe's reappearance in Beijing after many years and the status of this new period as both a continuation and validation of much of Choe's earlier work in China was remarked upon by some Chinese writers at the time. In his 1951 book, for example, which was published to coincide with the Choe Seung-hui Dance Research Course, Gu Yewen described Choe's arrival in the PRC as a long-awaited and triumphant return akin to the one imagined in the earlier 1948 *New China Weekly* article. Gu writes,

“So much has changed over the past ten years. The whole world has changed; it is hardly recognizable. Korea, which was at the time enslaved by Japan, has already gained

liberation. Choe Seung-hui, who previously had lost her native country, was now the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Moreover, she brings an updated technique along with her. [...] This time, she again returned to New China's capital, Beijing, where she once lived for many years, and now she is with even greater glory and happiness." (Gu 1951: 52).

Choe's return to Beijing in 1949 and continued work through 1952 was not only significant as a continuation and elevation from the perspective of her own biography, but also in terms of the theoretical and practical applications of her artistic vision. Through her work in the dance institutions of socialist China, especially the Choe Seung-hui Dance Research Course, Choe was able to finally realize a creative project she had first initiated with her early performances of Chinese-themed dances in 1941–1943, then articulated and expanded with her founding of the Oriental Dance Research Institute and her study with Chinese opera actors in 1944–1946, and continued to incubate through her establishment and running of a large-scale national school in Pyongyang in 1946–1950. As Gu states above, she brought back “an updated technique,” presumably referring to the matured form of her dancing and pedagogy developed at her school in Pyongyang. As she had in her earlier statements recorded in Shanghai in 1943 and 1945, Choe continued to argue that plentiful sources for dance creation existed within Chinese opera and that a new dance form made from these sources would have great value. What was different now is that she finally brought this vision to fruition not just on her own body but on the bodies of an entire cohort of Chinese students who would carry on her legacy in the years to come.

The Choe Seung-hui Dance Research Course lasted from March 1951 to October 1952 and included a group of young dancers who had been recruited from leading ensembles and schools around China (Figure 12). During the Course's opening ceremonies, Mei Lanfang personally spoke to endorse Choe's methods, marking an important continuity in Choe's personal relationships from the earlier period (Fang 1951). Apart from Mei, a long list of Peking opera and Kunqu actors also took part as advisors to Choe during her teaching of the Course, some of whom were artists Choe had worked with during her earlier visits to China. In 2005, a commemorative book edited by Tian Jing and

Li Baicheng was published in Beijing that offers a rich resource for information about this Course. This book includes over two hundred and fifty pages of detailed descriptions of the Course, including a complete list of student names, detailed student biographies, descriptions of the curriculum, photographs, and personal testimonials (Tian and Li 2005: 271–556). The title of the book, *New China's Cradle of Dance*



Figure 12, Choe Seung-hui and students during the Choe Seung-hui Dance Research Course in Beijing in 1951–52, Reproduced with permission from the private collection of Siqintariha and the Pioneers of Chinese Dance Digital Archive, Asia Library, University of Michigan.

Artists (Xin Zhongguo wudao yishujia de yaolan 新中國舞蹈藝術家的搖籃), gives a sense of the importance this program is afforded in current understandings of modern Chinese dance history among Chinese-speaking dancers and dance scholars.

Choe's Course was given an official quota of 110 students, half of whom were supposed to come from China and half from North Korea (Fang 1951; Tian and Li 2005: 279–280). Ultimately, the course was dominated by students from China, but North Korean students also made up a large number.⁶⁾ Students included both men and women, and a large percentage were from ethnic minority backgrounds. Many of the students who enrolled in this course went on to become prominent performers, teachers, choreographers, and scholars of dance who worked in professional dance ensembles and schools across China. Some of the most well-known of Choe's Chinese students from the 1951–52 Course include Mongol dance expert Baoyin Batu 寶音巴圖 (1929–2001), Korean dance expert Cui Meishan 崔美善 (b. 1934), Dunhuang dance expert Gao Jinrong 高金榮 (b. 1934), choreographer Lan Hang 籃珩 (b. 1935), Chinese classical dance expert Li Zhengyi 李正一 (b. 1929), Chinese dance drama choreographer Shu Qiao 舒巧 (b. 1933), Mongol dance expert Siqintariha 斯琴塔日哈 (b. 1932), ballet choreographer

6) The original quota was for 55 Chinese and 55 North Korean students. However, as of March 17, 1951, only thirty North Korean students were enrolled. According to Tian and Li, of a total of 120 students, 85 were Chinese and 35 were Korean.



Figure 13. Choe Seung-hui and students during the Choe Seung-hui Dance Research Course in Beijing in 1951–52. Reproduced with permission from the private collection of Sigintariha and the Pioneers of Chinese Dance Digital Archive, Asia Library, University of Michigan.

Wang Shiqi 王世琦 (1930), Chinese dance drama choreographer Zhang Minxin 章民新 (b. 1935), and ballet choreographer Jiang Zuhui 蔣祖慧 (b. 1934). Students in the Choe Seung-hui Dance Research Course received technical training in all of Choe’s major areas of expertise, including Korean classical and folk dance, “Southern Dance” (南方舞 *Nanfang wu*), Soviet ballet and folk dance, “New Dance” (*xinxing wu* 新興舞), improvisation,

and rhythm, as well as theoretical courses in dance history, political thought, literature, and music (Figure 13). The primary focus of the course was on studying and organizing basic movements for Chinese dance derived from Chinese opera (“Zhengli” 1951; Fang 1951; Tian and Li 2005) (Figure 14). These activities helped lay the foundation for the Chinese classical dance curriculum that would be implemented at the Beijing Dance School in 1954 and then promoted to dance conservatories across the country (Li et al 2004). It also helped set in motion events that would lead to the creation of the first full-length narrative Chinese dance dramas using Chinese classical dance movement vocabularies that began to emerge in the mid-to-late 1950s (Wilcox 2019).

Choe’s lasting impact as a founding figure of modern Chinese dance, particularly the style known as Chinese classical dance, has been widely acknowledged by leading dance scholars in China since the early 2000s (Su 2004; Li 2004; Li 2005). This is true not only because many influential figures in the history of Chinese classical dance were students in the Choe Seung-hui Dance Research Course, as explained above, but also because many of Choe’s theoretical ideas and technical innovations went on to become bedrock concepts in the development of dance in China over the subsequent decades. In particular, Choe was an early promoter of the idea that East Asian countries could develop dance forms as sophisticated, modern, and expressive as those being created in

Europe and the United States by drawing on their own aesthetic and cultural resources, rather than simply by copying Western dance forms. Moreover, she insisted that creativity and innovation were compatible with the inheritance of cultural dance traditions. This idea, which I have termed “dynamic inheritance,” is a core principle that has driven dance research, teaching, and choreographic innovations in China since the founding of the



Figure 14. Choe Seung-hui and students during the Choe Seung-hui Dance Research Course in Beijing in 1951–52. Reproduced with permission from the private collection of Siqintariha and the Pioneers of Chinese Dance Digital Archive, Asia Library, University of Michigan.

PRC in 1949 and remains central today (Wilcox 2018; Wilcox 2019). Apart from the specific dance forms Choe developed and the students she trained and inspired, this spirit of ingenuity and cultural pride can also be regarded as one of the most enduring legacies of Choe's work in China. This spirit was a driving principle in Choe's artistic efforts across multiple places and times throughout her career, and it is a constituent part of what “crossed over” from the imperial time of pan-Asianism to revolutionary time of socialist internationalism.

VI. Conclusion

In her 2013 article on Choe's early career, dance scholar Judy Van Zile makes the important point that when seeking to understand Choe's artistic contributions to dance history, it is important to recognize the persistent patterns in Choe's work that go beyond the confines of particular dance styles, political movements, or temporal periods. When examining the arc of Choe's work from the late 1920s to the late 1930s, for example, Van Zile observes Choe's enduring commitment to a modernist philosophy of experimentation and individuality, even as she develops a distinct dance style that

emphasizes themes and materials clearly adapted from Korean cultural sources. Rather than seeing Choe's early career as a shift from "modern dance" to "Korean dance," as others have often done, Van Zile instead recognizes continuity manifested in Choe's ongoing commitment to fusing modernity with tradition and to developing her own personal expression of Korean modernity through dance.

Similar to Van Zile's observations, in this essay I identify yet another way in which Choe's early artistic commitments can be seen driving later periods of her artistic career. In this case, I show how Choe applied her techniques for choreographic experimentation and developing a modern style of Korean dance to a new set of cultural sources, in this case those of Chinese operatic theater. In many ways, the artistic approaches and philosophies Choe brought to her work in China were of a piece with those she had developed in Japan and Korea earlier. When the escalation of Japanese imperialism had made it dangerous for Choe to continue her artistic explorations of Korean dance, she used the concept of Oriental Dance and its connection with pan-Asianist thought to find refuge in China and in a new project of developing modern Chinese dance. Rather than being confined to a particular political moment, this strategy of Choe's proved profoundly resilient and versatile. The project of modernizing East Asian cultural forms in ways that emphasized their distinctiveness and resisted Western cultural assimilation proved compatible with the ambitions of divergent political groups in East Asia during the twentieth century. Choe pinpointed this critical convergence and used it to her advantage as an artist, a teacher, and a cultural icon. By doing so, Choe was able to adapt each new opportunity to the pursuit of her own creative ends, and she thereby left her footprints on the dance histories of many distinct communities across the East Asian region.

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국문초록

가로지르기: 혁명적 시대 최승희의 범아시아주의

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최승희에 대한 과거 영어권 연구들은 대부분 1938-1940년의 월드투어와 1945년 이전의 일본과 한국에서의 활동에 초점을 맞췄다. 사회주의 세계에서 무용 창작에 대한 최승희의 기여는 대체로 간과되었다. 본 논문은 중국어 자료를 사용하여 기존 연구영역을 확대하는 가운데 최승희의 중국 경력 및 이것이 1945년 전후의 경력 사이의 연결고리에 미치는 영향을 조사한다. 본 연구는 중국에서의 최승희 활동 중 세 가지 중요한 부분을 다룬다. 중국 주제 안무 개발, 중국 오페라의 새로운 춤 형식 적용, 그리고 중국 무용 전문가의 첫 세대에 대한 교육이 그것이다. 나는 정치적 맥락의 변화에도 불구하고 중국에서 최승희의 활동이 계속되었다고 주장한다. 그녀가 동양무용이라는 범아시아주의 무용 프로젝트의 일환으로 1940 년대에 시작한 작업이 이후 1950 년대에는 사회주의 국제주의 하에서 중국 고전 무용으로 변형되었다.

<주요어> 최승희, 동양무용, 중국고전무용, 범아시아주의, 사회주의적 제국주의