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the *Salp'uri* Dance**

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Features of Korean Traditional Dance: *Han* and *Shin Myŏng* in the *Salp'uri* Dance

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This presentation is based on my learning and teaching of Korean traditional dances. Yi Maebang's style of the dance *Salp'uri* serves as a representative example. Through analysis of this dance, I want to introduce some basic features of Korean traditional dance. The concepts of *han* and *shinmyŏng* in traditional dance come from the wish to live together with Korea's natural environment (Kim Unmi 2008: 634). The dance movement based on the concept of *han* originates from the four phases of life – birth, old age, sickness, and death. The movement progresses on the repeating dynamics of the rhythmic cycle, *kutkŏri*:

The image displays a musical score for a 12/8 time signature piece. The notation includes a treble clef, a 12/8 time signature, and a sequence of notes and rests on a staff. Below the staff, Korean syllables are written: '딩', '기덕', '쿵', '더러러러', '쿵', '기덕', '쿵', '더러러러'. Below the syllables is a rhythmic pattern represented by a sequence of boxes: a circle with a vertical line, an empty box, a vertical line, a circle, a vertical line, an empty box, a circle, an empty box, a vertical line, a circle, a vertical line, an empty box.

Representative examples are 'big movement with a scarf (*taesam*)', 'small movement with a scarf (*sosam*)', and 'bending and stretching (*kursin*)'. Through these repeating movements, *han* is gradually transformed from sadness to happiness and from darkness to brightness.

On the stage of *han* as happiness and brightness, the rhythmic pattern is changed to the fast quadruple compound *chajinmori*. The tempo of the music gets faster. In this rhythmic cycle, the dancer and their audience can overcome the bitterness in their hearts transforming it into a resolution of deep sorrow. This moment is called *shinmyŏng*. After this stage, the rhythmic cycle goes back to *kutkŏri*. At this time, the dancer and their audience feel a different *han* to the first occurrence. This is the richness that comes with an empty mind full of the virtue of concord and harmony rather than full of sadness and darkness. With this feeling enshrined, the dance can finish.

The *Salp'uri* dance starts from the stern reality of life and reaches to a climax that is *shinmyŏng* in a mood of excitement. When the dancer and their audience experience *shinmyŏng*, the dance reaches a state of calm that returns back to the reality of life. The *Salp'uri* dance shows this processing through its continuous movements. The dancer sublimes an arduous and sad life within an are of performance. It repeats movements between emptiness that overcome sadness and moves from the darkness in our lives to filling the emptiness with the spiritual *shinmyŏng*. It is a representative folk dance that reflects the Korean people's understanding of their natural environment.

The concept of *Han* is a processing aesthetic that makes a positive feeling and brightness by overcoming the sadness and darkness that are characteristics of the stern realities of life. The sobriquet of Koreans as white-clad people stand as representative of the brightness. *Han* is living in agreement with nature, letting nature take its course. Korean people think that overcoming sadness and darkness is made possible through communing with nature. *Shinmyŏng* is a fundamental energy that is part of all Korean creative activities. It can be considered as a kind of trance. *Shinmyŏng* is the result of a positive feeling and brightness. It functions as an integration between working and entertaining that produces communal labour values. The vital aesthetic of Korea is based on this concept. Therefore, the processing of Korean dance starts from the sadness and darkness of *han*, moves through a positive feeling and brightness of *han* and resolves with *shinmyŏng*. Korean dance, then, is fundamentally based on a positive mind trying to communing with nature.

According to Chŏng Pyŏnggho (1987: 39), *Salp'uri ch'um* is a compound word: *Sal* + *p'uri* + *ch'um*. *Sal* indicates a bad omen seen as disease, accidents and conflicts between people, marked as failure. *P'uri* literally means 'solving', and in the context of Korean traditional dance it can signify the whole human processing to make positive feelings and brightness as one overcomes the sadness and darkness that come as part of the reality of life. The result of *p'uri* is *shinmyŏng*, creating a state that allows people to commune with the godhead as nature. *Ch'um* translates as 'dance' in English. Therefore, *Salp'uri ch'um* means the dance of communing with the godhead as nature. This concept is based on the philosophy of *ŭm* and *yang*. For East Asians, this philosophy applies to natural sciences like physics, medical science and astronomy, describing two opposing and, at the same time, complementary principles. The philosophy is the foundational basis of most Korean traditional dance movements, processed through movements that are not sudden or violent but gentle and gradual.