

Becoming an “Ethnic Dancer”: The Korean Traditional Dancer Halla Huhm and the Multi-culturalism in Hawai‘i

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In Hawai‘i, Korean dance represents the multicultural fabric of the islands. Korean dances are performed in ethnic festivals and ethnic shows, and both tourists and locals consume the “traditional dances” as cultural performances. The highlight of these shows and festivals are the performances of traditional dances by “ethnic dancers”. These “ethnic dancers” became a focus of people on the islands in the 1970s and 1980s, when the Hawaiian Renaissance and the civil rights movement produced a cultural revival among native Hawaiians and Asian minority groups on the islands; not only did “traditional dances” and “ethnic dancers” symbolize the cultural legacy of these groups, but they also presented a challenge to the hegemonic culture (Diamond 2004). In other words, Korean dance and Korean dancers in Hawai‘i do not only represent a culture on the other side of the Pacific, but also the ethnic pride of Koreans living in diasporic communities in Hawai‘i.

This paper will focus on one Korean dancer who played a significant role in establishing the art form of Korean traditional dance on the Islands: Halla Pai Huhm.¹⁾ No other person or group has taught and performed Korean traditional dances in Hawai‘i as long as Halla Huhm did. She was born

1) This paper will follow the McCune-Reischauer and modified Hepburn system, except for Halla Pai Huhm because she identified herself as “Pai” and gave her name “Pai” to her students: the name 裴 will be Romanized as “Pai” for Halla Huh, but “Bae” for Bae Kuja. Korean names and Japanese names who have resided in Japan or Korea are written with the surname preceding the given name, except for Halla Pai Huhm to avoid confusion.

in Korea in 1922 and migrated to Hawai'i in 1949. She opened a dance studio in 1950, and while continuing to teach and perform, she also started teaching Korean dance classes at the University of Hawai'i in 1959, inviting Korean dancers from South Korea to teach at the university and in her studio. In 1979, the Korean Community Council recognized her as the first Outstanding Korean in Hawai'i. In 1989, she and her studio were invited to Washington, D.C., as arts delegates to represent the cultural diversity of Hawai'i at the Smithsonian Institution's Festival of American Folklife.

A number of studies have traced her steps, including a 2003 documentary film. These studies have focused mostly on her contributions to Korean culture in Hawai'i, stressing the significant role that she played in empowering the Korean community (Lee 2015; Nishiguchi 1982; Van Zile 2001, 2007; Yoo 2015). However, what is not spoken in these studies is her earlier career: Halla Huhm started to perform on stage as a member of her aunt's performance group, Bae Kuja Performing Troupe, in Japan and Korea under Imperial Japan during the 1920s and 1930s. She not only performed Korean dance but also modern dance and tap dance and did acrobatics to jazz music. She spoke fluent Japanese and went to school in Japan. And because of her bi-lingual and bi-cultural background, she was able to give dance lessons in Hawai'i to non-Korean students, after immigrating to Hawai'i, as well as perform other forms of ethnic dances. This paper, thus will focus on her route of travel that started from Korea and Japan to Hawai'i, and shed light on the social context that made it possible for her to become an "ethnic dancer" of Hawai'i.

1. What is Korean dance?

The term Korean dance refers to any dance that is developed, directly or indirectly, in relation to the Korean peninsula or Korean people. It therefore includes various kinds of dance, including K-pop dance and modern dance, but, in terms of "traditional" dance, there are two main varieties: First is the Hanguk Muyong or Hanguk traditional dance, which encompasses

court dance, religious dance and folk dance, and is organized and preserved mainly by the South Korean government through the Kungnip Kugagwŏn or National Classical Music Institute, established in 1962. Hanguk Muyong is based on the dances originating in the premodern period, but it also includes the dances “invented” in recent years, probably the most well-known of which is the oft-performed Samulnori. The changes in the style of dance is correlated to the place that these dances are performed: Today, Korean dances are performed mostly on stages, rather than a palace courtyard or room.

The second main variety of “traditional” dance is the Ch'oson Muyong or Ch'oson Dance, which is a mixture of modern and traditional dances.²⁾ It was originally created by Ch'oe Sŭnghŭi, but was developed in North Korea. In the North, dance was used to spread Communist Party ideology, therefore songs and dances tend to reflect the propaganda of the time and emphasize the nostalgic folk life of the Korean people (Kim 2000). However, it is important to note that dance was organized and reorganized to promote the peoplehood of Koreans, not only in the North but also in the South, as part of the nation's search for a post-colonial ‘autonomous subjectivity’. In other words, “traditional dances” in Korea were invented and re-invented to serve as a wheel to solidify and express the ethno-national pride of the people (Kim 2000, Kim 2004).

For Koreans in the diaspora, Korean dance often served as a way of affirming and reaffirming ethnic identity. Lee Yangji (李良枝), an award-winning *Zainichi* Korean (resident Korean) writer in Japan, who discussed her feelings of alienation with regard to living in Japan and Korea, observes that she was able to connect to her ethnic roots through traditional dance, writing: “Through Korean dance, I was able to meet my ancestors, whom

2) It is not very common to categorize Ch'oson Muyong as one of the traditional dances in Korea, not only because it was created in the modern times, but also because of the music and rhythm combined by the Korean “national” music and Western “progressive elements” (Yu 2007, 56). However, Ch'oson Muyong is regarded and performed as an ethnic dance among Koreans in the diaspora to represent their history, culture and community, therefore this paper will categorize it as one of the traditional dances of Korea.

have allowed me to exist today, in the imaginative world of dance. I was also able to feel the soul of my ethnicity flowing through me like ground water” (Lee 1993, 649). Dance is an expression of the “body,” and, because of this, Korean dancers in the diaspora have spoken about dance in the following manners: “The rhythm of the drums naturally came into me. I felt as if my ethnic blood was awakened by it”,³⁾ “My body started to dance. I felt that I have Korean blood”.⁴⁾ Dancers become “more Korean” through dance, therefore, it is essential for the studies to focus on the process of becoming an “ethnic dancer” and explicate the ways in which the ethnic “roots” are re-interpreted through their “route of travel” (Clifford 1997).

Moreover, Korean dance also serves to reinforce a sense of long-distance nationalism in diasporic communities. The Ch'oson Muyong performing group, known as Kūmgangsan Kagūktan in Japan, is a Pro-North organization, Ch'ongnyōn's affiliated theatrical performing troupe and was established in 1955 under the name of Chosōn Chungang Yesultan; but when they became the Haeoe kongmin kagūktan to spread the propaganda of North Korea through music, dance and instrumental play, they tried to reproduce the dance of North Korea. They also traveled frequently to Pyongyang and started to perform in the North every year from 1974. Zainichi Korean dancers of Ch'oson Muyong (also known as “Chosen Buyo” in Japanese), regarded the dancers and choreographers of the North as “authentic” and “genuine” mentors and teachers. As a consequence, their performances, which were embedded in school gatherings and other community practices, provided a way to enhance their sense of belonging, not only as ethnic Koreans, but also as North Korean nationals.

Korean dance, therefore, is an “ethnic dance” that represents history, culture and tradition, as well as ethnic roots and the routes of travel of the people who make up the diaspora, and it is also intertwined with the

3) “Zaikan Zainichi”, *Asahi Shinbun*, December 5, 1997.

4) “Kenkoku no Dentou Geinou Netsuen”, *Asahi Shinbun* (Hyogo), December 5, 1997.

ethnicism and nationalism of the ancestral homeland and/or adopted homeland. Moreover, these dances are practiced by complex groups of people today, and Korean dance represents the multiple realities that diasporic communities are facing, including generational change, inter-racial marriage and socio-economic shifts; Korean dance also responds to and manifests the global forces that are changing societies, such as Hallyu, anti-immigration movements and racism. As a consequence, it is essential to disentangle the changing landscape of Korean dance and explore the ways in which these dances are contextualized within their local-national-global dynamics.

2. Early career – Becoming a Korean revue dancer in prewar Japan

Halla was born in Pusan, Korea, in 1922, and, when she was around 5 years old, she and her three sisters were taken to live with her aunt, Bae Guja (裴龜子, also known as Hai Kameko in Japan) in order to receive training as performers. Because Halla's career as a dancer in Japan began and ended with her aunt, this paper will first trace Bae Guja's life in Japan and Korea.

Halla's aunt Bae Guja was born in 1905. Her mother Bae Chongja, known in Japanese as Hai Sadako (裴貞子), was an adopted daughter of Ito Hirobumi, the Prime Minister of Japan at the turn of the 20th century who became Resident-General of Korea (1905 – 1909) in the years after Korea lost its sovereignty in foreign affairs to Japan in 1905. Because her mother worked at the royal court in Korea, Guja was exposed to Korean court dances during her youth.⁵⁾ Guja was later adopted by Shodai Tenkatsu, a well-known female magician in Japan (初代松旭齋天勝). Guja was trained as a performer so that she could debut in Tenkatsu's performing group, Tenkatsuzo, which performed a kind of Western, vaudeville, theatrical entertainment show in Japan. Guja made her debut in 1918, when she was around 13 years old, and because of her talent as an actor, singer, and magician, she soon became one of the top performers in the group, though she also became

5) Anonymous (former assistant of Halla Huhm), October 2016, Personal Interview.

a symbol that justified the cultural imperialism of the Japanese Empire in Korea (An-Jong Song 2009: 60).

In 1926, Guja left Tenkatsu-za and established her own studio in Seoul, which was known as Keijo under the Imperial government. Her studio taught Western styles of dancing, singing and acting. One magazine featured a special article on her studio and reported that the girls in the studio were practicing how to dance to the Western music “Shine” and “Yumoresuku” in their upcoming show; the article went on to describe the way that Guja’s studio had been decorated in a Western style. It was important that Guja established a school for Western-style dancing because, at the time, it was thought that respectable women should not dance in public, especially not in front of men (Van Zille 2007, 256). In addition, in those days female dancers were perceived as being related to “*Kisaeng*” (*Kisaeng* is commonly translated as “Korean Geisha” or “Korean female entertainers”, however this translation does not account for historical context, since professional dancers in the royal court served as public servants in the pre-colonial period, and became “geisha” in the colonial period). *Kisaeng* women, in the colonial period, were no longer regarded as professional dancers but were degraded as a sexual worker who represented the subjugation of colonized women by the colonial order (Kawamura 2001: 212, 219).⁶⁾ On the other hand, modern dances were perceived as a part of Western culture and a product of modernity. “Modern girls and boys”, also known as “mogas and mobos”, became a fashion for the young, educated Koreans in Seoul, and going to theatre and seeing modern dances was perceived as a part of pursuing a modern life. Thus, it was important that Halla’s aunt established a dancing studio that taught Western-style dances.

Halla and her sisters started to live with Guja in order to receive training as performers, probably around the time Guja opened her studio, though the

6) Gender and sex was the primary concern for colonial and imperial powers on cultural politics of empire to manage the structures of exploitation and domination (Fujitani 2011: 335–374; Inoue 2013; Kim & Choi 1998).

dates are unclear and the Halla Huhm Foundation's biography of her states that she went to Japan to live with her aunt at the age of five.⁷⁾ The studio had around ten students, and so Halla and her sisters, who lived together with Guja and her first husband, made up nearly half the students. In later years, Halla explained her relationship with Guja and noted that she was a "onni (언니, older sister)" to her; in Korean, it is common to call a woman older than oneself "onni", but, in fact, Guja seems to have been more like a teacher, who taught Halla how to become a professional performer, or to acquire "(Gei) 芸" in Japanese. In describing her life with her aunt, Halla wrote:

I was only 5 or 6 years old and cried so many times in my bed thinking about my mother... One day I was practicing the crying scene on stage. My sister said that the way I cry is not good enough so she hit my face many times. My sister was so scary, I could not cry or move my body anymore, and my sister said to me: "I am telling you to cry like the way you did in your bed last night!" (Huhm 1977: 72)

Over the next few days, Halla noted that her aunt Guja gave her a cream to heal her swollen red cheeks (Ibid.).

It is interesting to think about how and what kind of dance Halla learned in these days. First of all, Guja was a teacher, and Halla acquired the basics of dancing, singing and acting from her. This education included not only modern styles of dance but also Korean dances. There are very few documents and writings left today that tell us what kind of dances Halla learned, but she told an assistant, who lived with her in her later years in Hawai'i, that she learned Korean shaman dances from Guja, which Guja had learned directly from a Korean shaman. Halla also acquired skills in Korean court dancing from Guja, since Guja had been exposed to Korean court dances when she was young, although Guja's experience was limited

7) http://www.hawaii.edu/korea/halla_huhm/Biography/biography.htm

and different from the way professional court dancers had been trained in the pre-colonial period. Halla also received various kinds of training from professionals in various fields in Japan and Korea:

My sister had her own ideas. She believed that it was important to learn about other people because it will help us with our own lives right away. So we learned ballet, Indian dance, Japanese dance, acrobatics, tap dance, *kabuki* and *shinkigeki*, a kind of Japanese popular theatrical drama, and we learned from experts in each field. For example, we learned about theatrical shows from Shiro Otsuji (大辻司朗), who has passed away by now, about *kabuki* from Ennosuke Ichikawa, about tap dance from Ichiro Nakagawa, about modern dance from Masami Kuni, about Japanese dance from Umeshizu Hanayanagi, about tea ceremony and *Ikebana* flower arrangement, and moreover about Western musical instruments and Korean instruments; we learned it all. We learned how to play Western string music from Sangkun Shim-*sensei*. (Huhm 1977: 72–73)

Halla also wrote that she had a chance to learn Korean traditional dance from Han Seongjun (韓成俊), who is known as one of the most important figures in Korean dance history. Halla described her dancing lessons as follows:

When I was 11 years old, I learned dance from Han Songjun teacher. I am not exactly sure but I think the studio was in the small alley in Nakwondong. The small Ondol room was his studio. At that time, I did not think it was a very difficult thing, because I did not understand the Korean language. I first learned the Buddhist dance, Sungmu (僧舞). (Huhm 1977: 75)

As Halla noted in her article, she did not speak fluent Korean when she was young, so it is difficult to tell how well she understood the lessons. But it is important to note here that she had a chance to learn the basic rhythm and

steps from Han Seognjun, since the rhythm and steps are a fundamental element of Korean traditional dances.

In 1930, Halla started to perform on stage with Guja and her siblings in Japan. Her aunt Guja established a performing group, Hai Kameko Performance Group (裴龜子歌舞劇団), whose name was later changed to Hai Kameko Performing Troupe (裴龜子樂劇団), and the group started to tour around Japan. The members of Guja's performing group were all girls, and they performed an act that could be classified as a revue dance and musical show. In those days, revue dances and musical shows were popular in Japan, and performance groups like Takarazuka and Shochiku were especially famous. The actresses who played the male parts often became stars in Japan. Guja's performance group danced, acted, played instruments and sang, and their performances included everything from modern dance, tap dance and acrobatics, to jazz music. But what made Guja's group popular and unique was the way their performances highlighted the folk life in Korea with glamorous stage sets and costumes. The girls sang old Korean folk songs, like "Yang san Do" and "Arirang", and performed simple Korean dance steps. They also performed stories and plays about Korean myths and folk tales, and all these elements helped them create a performance that evoked the nostalgic folk life of Korea. However, their performance and costumes were not like the plain and simple garments that Korean women wore in everyday life, but colorful and bright, and the acrobatic and modern dances that they performed highlighted the female body. Together, all these elements made for an exotic performance (Kim 2015). The show instantly fascinated Japanese audiences, and Guja entered into an exclusive contract with Yoshimoto, the leading entertainment agency in Japan. According to Song An-Jong, Guja had an exclusive contract with Yoshimoto from 1932 to 1934, and she and her performing group continued to appear in Yoshimoto's productions until at least 1937 because of their popularity (Song 2009, 76).

Why did Guja make this kind of show? In one interview, she speaks about bringing Korean culture to the stage. She states that she wanted to revive

traditional Korean culture by putting it in a modern performance:

In Japan, Shizue Fujima had created a new type of dance by incorporating Western dance into traditional Japanese dance. I also wanted to incorporate Korean and Western dancing and revive Korean arts in today's style. If I couldn't do this, what is the point of dancing? For my first attempt, I tried to make the religious dance (念佛) into a stage dance. (*Sam Ch'ŏnri* 1929: 99–101)

At the time, Guja's attempt was unique because Korean traditional dances were not made to be performed on stage but were part of everyday life and were performed mostly off the stage. They were performed in the palace courtyard in the pre-colonial period, and if these dances were performed in the colonial period, it was limited to small rooms in front of few people. Guja was a pioneer in adapting traditional Korean dances for the stage, in a way different from what Ch'oe Sŭnghŭi (known in Japanese as Sai Shoki, 崔承喜) did for modern ballet.

On stage, Halla was known as Hai Tatsuko (裴龍子). She was one of the stars of the group "The Pai Sisters". Halla was around 9 years old when she started to perform in Japan in Guja's shows, and she continued to perform until 1937 or 38, when she was 16 or 17. There were around 30 members of the group and she performed the leading roles. Since she had been trained to play male parts and was not allowed to have long hair, when she got older she often performed these roles. Her popularity came not only from her male-roles in the revue shows but also from her talent in performing Korean folk songs and plays. The following is a description of Halla from Yoshimoto's magazine:

The duet by Tatsuko Hai and Kiyoko Ko. What a beautiful song and dance by these dainty little girls... The climax of the show is a Korean phantasmal play, "The Folktale of Hakutosan Tennoike". The young blind girl (Tatuko Hai) arrives at the top of the Mountain to find a

miracle drug that can cure various kinds of disease... The beautiful story is over. The heart and soul of the audience is filled with sorrow, just like when we have a dream that leaves us with sweet and bitter emotion .. (Yoshimoto Kogyo Gomei Kaisha 1937: 12)

Even after ending exclusive contract with Yoshimoto, Halla and Guja's performing group continued to perform for Yoshimoto, but Guja also opened a theatre in Korea in 1935 (Tongyang Kūkchang, 東洋劇場). It was the first modern theatre in Korea that was established by, owned by and performed in by Koreans, but it was only open for few years before Guja closed the theatre. There is no documentation to tell us exactly what Halla did and where she stayed in the late 1930s, but from one news article, we know that Halla sang Korean songs on stage in Japan during this time ("Kyomibukashi Kyokucho, Chōsen Minyō", *Tokyo Asahi Shinbun*, December 22, 1936). She also was given the name, Bae Guja from her aunt, which allowed her to teach at the dancing studio that Guja had opened in Tokyo, which was also known as Midorigaoka Studio. Halla states that while she was at Midorigaoka Studio for 5 years, she finished her education at Mita Jyoko (三田女高) and acquired her home economics degree at "Jissen Women's University" in Shibuya (Huhm 1977: 75).⁸⁾

Halla returned to Korea around 1940 (Van Zille 2007, 262). There are no documents or writings that describe how she spent these years, but the only available fact today is that she got married to a Hawaiian-born Korean American soldier in Korea. Halla Bae became Halla Huhm and moved to Hawai'i as a war bride in 1949.

8) The name of the "Jissen Women's University" that Halla Huhm have mentioned in her writings will be one of the following Jissen schools: Jissen Koto Jyogakkou (実践高等女学校), Jissen Jyoshi Senmon Gakkou (実践女子専門学校), Jissen Jitsuka Koto Jyogakkou (実践実科高等女学校).

3. Postwar years: Becoming a Korean ethnic dancer in Hawai'i

Studies on Halla note that she started to teach dance at her home in 1950, not long after settling in Hawai'i (Nishiguchi 1982; Van Zile 2001, 2007). There are also few pictures at the Halla Huhm Collection at the University of Hawai'i that offer an insight into her early life on the Islands. One of them is a picture that shows Halla teaching Ikebana, traditional Japanese flower arrangement, to Japanese Americans. Another is a picture of her performing in the Honolulu Community Theatre's production of *Teahouse of the August Moon* in 1954, playing the role of a Japanese Geisha.

From these documents, it is possible to see that she resumed her dancing career right after settling in Hawai'i, but Halla's assistant has said in interviews that she first worked at a Japanese-style hotel in order to make ends meet. In order to make enough money to run her dance studio, she later became a tour guide for Japanese American tourists that wanted to visit Japan and Korea. She could speak Japanese, so she was able to find work within the Japanese American community, which constituted 37 percent of the population of Hawai'i in 1950 and 32% in 1960 (Nordyke 1989: 178–179). These connections allowed her to spread the word of her dancing skills within the Japanese American community, and she soon started to teach dance to young Japanese Americans. Nishiguchi, one of Halla's former students who wrote a master's thesis on her, notes that, in the 1950s, her students were mostly Japanese American girls (Nishiguchi 1982: 106). She taught traditional Korean dances but also tried to get involved in Japanese, Chinese, Okinawan and Filipino dance groups. Nishiguchi reports that at one point she sent her students to Okinawan, Japanese, and Filipino dance classes, and arranged for her students to perform these dances at a recital (Nishiguchi 1982: 47). Her recitals brought various kinds of dances together on stage and were a great success, and the lead dancer appeared several times in the local newspaper due to her popularity. Halla Huhm was now known as a Korean dancer who made a successful "International" stage.⁹⁾

9) "Dance Program is International", *The Star-Bulletin* (July 25, 1962)

How did the Korean community in Hawai'i respond to this? The Korean community in Hawai'i was a much smaller community than the Japanese community and was only 1.3% (9,625) of the total population in 1970, though the Korean population began growing each year after the 1965 Immigration Act (Nurdyke 1989: 178–179). One document shows that, right after her settlement in Hawai'i, Halla danced in Korean churches as well as the YMCA or YWCA, where Koreans often gathered. This made her known as a dancer in the Korean community, however, the Korean community did not give much support to her work or begin sending their kids to her studio until the late 1960s. Heather A. Diamond points out that she had little support from the Korean community in Hawai'i until Halla and her studio participated the Smithsonian Folklife Festival in 1989 (Diamond 2004: 131). This is partially due to the fact that Korean dances were still seen as a part of *Kisaeng* culture by the members of Korean community. Additionally, a Korean professor of ethnomusicology in the University of Hawai'i had called Huhm's Korean dance "fake", as she had grown up in Japan, and learned "Japanese dance" (Ibid.).

However, the perception of Halla within the Hawaiian Korean community drastically changed in the 1970s and 80s, in response to transformations on both sides of Pacific. The first of these was the so-called "Hawaiian Renaissance" or the revival of native Hawaiian traditions. This social movement, in addition to the civil rights movement in the US, brought "traditions" back into the spotlight, not only for Hawaiians but also for the non-white (non-Haole) ethnic groups in Hawai'i. Presenting their "traditions" and "roots" became crucial for minorities to participate in the multicultural politics of Hawai'i (Diamond 2004). In this context, within the Korean community, Halla Huhm became known as an "ethnic dancer," or a dancer who could dance, perform and represent the "traditional" culture of his or her group.

Her career as an "ethnic dancer" increased her opportunities to teach and perform Korean dance. She started teaching at the University of Hawai'i

in 1959. In 1962, she was appointed by the Governor of Hawai'i to be a Cultural Commissioner of the Hawai'i State Foundation and the Arts. While teaching at the university and at her studio, she also performed at various places including the state fair, the Academy of Honolulu (Honolulu Museum), Korean and non-Korean cultural and fundraising events, local festivals, public school programs, and even private wedding and birthday celebrations. From 1960 to 1966, she and her studio also danced every week in the "multi-ethnic show" for tourists at a restaurant called Natsunoya (Nishiguchi 1982, 118). In 1972, when the Center of Korean Studies (CKS) was established at the University of Hawai'i, CKS received funding from the state for the "Korean Heritage Development Project", which was supposed to teach Korean dance, customs, and rhythms to anyone in the Hawaiian population from the age of 3 to 70 years old. The number of Halla's performances increased every year, and, in 1980, she performed nearly fifty times. In 1980 and 81, Halla Huhm received the largest grant (\$6,000) among Asian groups from the Cultural Heritage Development Program, a part of the Hawai'i State Foundation for Culture and the Arts (SFCA) (Diamond 2004: 62).

It is interesting to note that Halla's grants were mostly used to pay her expenses for travel to Korea, as well as to invite dancers from Korea to teach at her studio and at the University of Hawai'i (Lee 2015). The dancers that she learned from in this period include Pak Songam (朴松岩), a priest formally recognized by the Korean government for his expertise in Buddhist ritual music and dance (巫舞); Yi Chisan (李芝山), a shaman known for his rituals and shamanistic dance; Kim Mokhwa (金木花), one of the most famous salp'uri dancers in Korea; Kim Ch'önhŭng (金千興), a court dancer recognized by the Korean government; Kim Kwangsöp (金炳燮) and an expert in a kind of farmers' dance, called Nongak (Van Zile 2001 p159, 224). In 1983, Halla was invited by Cho' ōnju University of Education in Korea to teach Korean dance. After returning to Hawai'i following this performance, she continued to travel frequently between

Korea and Hawai'i, establishing close ties between Hawai'i and South Korea through dance.

Another transformation that changed the perception of Halla was the way that Korean traditional dance was understood in South Korea. In South Korea, the search for post-colonial 'autonomous subjectivity' led to traditional culture being adapted into state-oriented, ethno-racial nationalist forms (Kim 2004: 14; 36). In 1962, the Cultural Property Preservation Law was the first piece of legislation to pursue this national pride and collective appreciation of the past (Van Zile 2001: 61–62; Kim 2004: 75). In the same year, the National Dance Company was established and started to play a central role in reviving and organizing Korean traditional dances. These acts of recognition 'reinvented' the Korean folk, religious, and court dances, turning them into 'Hanguk traditional dances' (Kim 2004: 79–80). Moreover, folk music and dances were used by South Korean students and activists to express their resistance to the military government (Lee 2003: 561–568). Korean traditional dances no longer represented the *Kisaeng* culture but became a way of expressing collective ethno-national pride in being a Korean. And, in contrast to music, Korean dances that generated and propelled ethno-nationalism were mostly rendered through women's bodies (Kim 2004: 10).

It is interesting to observe that Halla Huhm's studio's advertising changed in the postwar years, reflecting these changes in Korea. In the first years after her settlement in Hawai'i, her studio taught "Chosen Buyo," but, in later years, she started to call it a "Hanguk Traditional Dance" studio. "Chosen Buyo", literally means Korean dance, and "Chosen" was widely used to refer to Korea and Koreans in the colonial period. But, in the postwar years, South Korean dancers defined their dances as "Hanguk Traditional Dance" in order to differentiate them from North Korean dances. Today, "Chosen Buyo" (朝鮮舞踊) refers to North Korean dance, a mix of traditional Korean and modern dance that was developed by Ch'oe Sünghŭi (崔承喜).

As a result of these transformations, Halla Huhm was recognized as an

expert in Korean traditional dance in both Hawai'i and South Korea. In 1979, the Korean Community Council awarded her the first Outstanding Korean in Hawai'i Award. In 1989, she and her studio were invited to Washington D.C., as arts delegates to represent the cultural diversity of Hawai'i at the Smithsonian Institution's Festival of American Folklife. From this period until her death in 1994, Halla Huhm received numerous awards for her contributions to traditional Korean culture both from the State of Hawai'i and the South Korean government. In 2003, during the centennial celebrations of Korean immigration to Hawai'i, she was recognized as one of twenty-seven eminent Koreans in Hawai'i.

4. Conclusion: Multiculturalism and Ethno-culturalism of Hawai'i

What made it possible for Halla Huhm to become a prominent “ethnic dancer” in Hawai'i? First, it was her talent in transforming Korean dances to modern performances. Because of her earlier career in Imperial Japan as a dancer who performed Korean dance along with her western and modern style dances on the stage, she was able to bring not only the Korean traditional dance to Hawai'i, but also her talent and experiences to arrange Korean dance as a stage performance rather than a traditional way of showing it off the stage. Even in Korea, it was not until the late 1960s, 1970s and 1980s that these traditional dances were re-invented to show on the stage. Halla Huhm was one of the pioneer dancers to establish this modern style in the Korean traditional dances on both sides of the Pacific.

Halla Huhm also changed her style of dance from “International” to “ethnic” after her settlement in Hawai'i. When Halla Huhm first opened her dance studio, she had Japanese American students and made a stage that brought Korean and non-Korean dances to the stage, which was called “International” by the local media. In a way, this was the stage that Halla had performed her Korean dances on during the colonial period in Japan. In other word, it was her style to perform various genres to make an entertainment show. But when Halla Huhm started teaching at the University of Hawai'i

in 1959 and the Governor of Hawai'i appointed her to be the Cultural Commissioner of the Hawai'i State Foundation on Culture and the Arts in 1962, she started to focus exclusively on Korean dance. She then travelled frequently to Korea to advance her skills in Korean traditional dances, as well as her Korean language skills and became a dancer who was able to perform and teach Korean traditional dances both in Hawai'i and Korea.

Her career developed along with the multi-culturalism of Hawai'i. The Hawaiian Renaissance and the civil rights movement in the 1970s and 80s produced a cultural revival among native Hawaiians and Asian minority groups and the leaders of the ethnic groups promoted the idea of "ethno-culturalism". It is the idea that "the members of the ethnic group should establish ethnic identity and take part in passing on their culture to the next generation as well as to contribute in developing its culture" (Shiramizu 2018, 4). The leaders of the Korean community also supported Halla Huhm's Korean dance by inviting her to the community events around the same time, awarding her as the first Outstanding Korean in Hawai'i Award in 1979 and recognizing her as one of twenty-seven eminent Koreans in Hawai'i during the centennial celebration of Korean immigration in 2003.

Her career was also supported by the public offices of Hawai'i. In 1972, when the Center of Korean Studies was established at the University of Hawai'i, the center received funding from the State for the "Korean Heritage Development Project", which supported Halla Huhm's teaching of Korean dance, customs, and rhythms to anyone in the Hawaiian population from the age of 3 to 70 years old. In 1980 and 81, among Asian groups, Halla Huhm and her studio were the recipient of the largest grant (\$6,000) awarded by the Cultural Heritage Development Program, a part of the Hawai'i State Foundation on Culture and the Arts (SFCA) (Diamond 2004: 62). While teaching at the university and at her studio, Halla Huhm also gave performances in a variety of venues, including the Hawai'i State Fair, the Academy of Honolulu (Honolulu Museum), Korean and non-Korean cultural and fundraising events, local festivals, and public school

programs, in addition to private weddings and birthdays. In 1989, she and her studio were invited to Washington D.C. as arts delegates representing Hawai'i's cultural diversity at the Smithsonian Institution's Festival of American Folklife. Moreover, Korean dance became part of the tourist industry of Hawai'i: from 1960 to 1966, every week Halla Huhm and her studio performed in a "multi-ethnic show" for tourists at a restaurant called Natsunoya (Nishiguchi 1982, 118). In this way, Korean dance became a "visual symbol" for the Korean community to represent who they are in the Islands, and Halla became an "ethnic dancer" of Hawai'i.¹⁰⁾

However, what made it possible for her dance studio to continue for decades among other ethnic dancers also lies in her beliefs that spread multiculturalism in her studio. As the previous studies have pointed out, Halla Huhm has played a significant role in empowering the Korean community, not only through her performances but also her role in teaching Korean culture (Lee 2015; Nishiguchi 1982; Van Zile 2001, 2007; Yoo 2015). She emphasized the importance of learning Korean culture for the younger generations of the Korean diaspora.¹¹⁾ However, she did not only empower ethnic Koreans, but also did much for non-Koreans through her teaching. Most of the non-Korean students in the studio had rarely seen Korean dance before and began practicing it when they attended classes at the University of Hawai'i, but they were able to continue the Korean dances even after finishing their classes at the university because of the role that Halla Huhm played. In the interview, three non-Korean dancers in her studio said they were able to continue dancing even though they were not ethnically Korean, because Halla Huhm had told them that it was not their background that mattered but their understanding of Korean dance and culture.¹²⁾ Today,

10) See Van Zile for more detail on Korean dance in Hawai'i as a "visual symbol" (Van Zile 2001, 228).

11) Interview with author, Mary Jo Freshley, August 29, 2018, Halla Huhm Korean Dance Studio.

12) Interview with author, anonymous, August 31, 2018, Honolulu; Interview with author, anonymous, August 31, 2018, Honolulu.

her studio is directed by Mary Jo Freshley, a Caucasian woman, and she also shared a story in the interview that when she once dyed her hair in black for the recital but she never did that again because Halla Huhm told her it wasn't necessary.¹³⁾ Halla Huhm stressed the importance of learning dance and culture, not asking who they are, where they come from, or how they look, and this made it possible for both ethnic Koreans and non-ethnic Koreans to practice Korean dance in her studio.

Halla Huhm's transpacific route of traveling is continuing in her studio even after her death in 1994. Today, her studio's faculty and students include Koreans, non-Koreans, and mixed-race locals and the members of the studio are interested in preserving their history. They regard their studio as part of Hawaiian culture: both inseparable from the history of dance in Korea and a unique aspect of Hawai'i's history. Their dance pieces include Noin ch'um, or the old man's dance, a piece Halla Huhm originally choreographed, Aloha Janggo Nori (a fusion of Samulnori and Hawaiian instrumental music and dance) created by Mary Jo Freshley, and many other pieces that members of the studio have created, choreographed and performed. It also includes Korean dances taught by dancers from Korea, and the members of the studio are particularly interested in how they can preserve and dance these pieces as a part of the multi-cultural dances of Hawai'i.

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13) Interview with author, Mary Jo Freshley, August 29, 2018, Halla Huhm Korean Dance Studio.

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