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ARTICLES

Negotiating Religion, Tradition, and Modernity in Post-19th century Korean *Seungmu* Dance

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The research presented in this article explores numerous themes surrounding seungmu, or monk's dance, a Korean dance tradition with roots in Korean Buddhism. Seungmu, which has been designated as the twenty-seventh Intangible Cultural Property of Korea, radically transformed throughout the twentieth century due to the influence of Western concepts of modernity and the Japanese colonial occupation of Korea from 1910–1945. The monk's dance is formally recognized today as a secular folk dance, with no extant religious meaning. This article combines historical research and ethnographic methods to analyze seungmu's modernization through the twentieth century and examine how current practitioners of seungmu recognize its status in contemporary Korea. This article states that seungmu became an important site for Korea's national identity construction following colonial oppression and the trauma of the Korean War (1950–1953), and its modern evolution is best understood as a process of "dynamic inheritance." The present-day form of seungmu challenges binary categorizations of authentic versus contemporary, secular versus religious, and enchanted or modern; ultimately, standardized, contemporary seungmu encompasses a multifaceted modern identity.

Introduction

Seungmu, or "monk's dance," is a historically Buddhist dance form unique to Korea. It has been designated as the nation's twenty-seventh Intangible Cultural Property of Korea and has a long and complex history. According to some sources, it dates back as far as the seventh century CE and is a devised dance from *Popkoch'um*, a Buddhist dance traditionally performed by a monk as a part of temple rituals.[1] *Seungmu* gained popularity in the sixteenth century and then radically transformed during the twentieth century due to the influence of Western concepts of modernity and the Japanese colonial occupation of Korea from 1910–1945. S*eungmu* became an important site for Korea's national identity construction following colonial oppression and the trauma of the Korean War (1950–1953). In the modern day, *seungmu* is designated as a strictly secular dance.

1 Judy Van Zile, "The Many Faces of Korean Dance." in *Moving History/Dancing Cultures: A Dance History Reader*, eds. Ann Dils and Ann Cooper Albright (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), 178-90.

By contrast, this article argues that despite *seungmu's* formal recognition as a secular folk dance and cultural asset of the nation, the contemporary "monk's dance" is unable to fully escape its Buddhist origins. It demonstrates that *seungmu* can still function today as a personal spiritual exercise for the individual dancer, ultimately encompassing a complex and multifaceted modern identity. By drawing on historical, theoretical, and ethnographic research in Korea during the pandemic year of 2020–2021, I analyze *seungmu*'s evolution throughout the twentieth century and examine how current practitioners of *seungmu* recognize its hybrid status in contemporary Korea. I also analyze how modern *seungmu* dancers acknowledge the impact of the Japanese colonial period on *seungmu's* (re)invention as well as note embodied encounters with *seungmu* as a student of the form. I thus contribute an original and unacknowledged dimension of *seungmu* dance that lies at the intersection of Korean Buddhism, dance history, colonialism, nationalism, and the secularizing discourse of modernity.

Methodology

My methodological approach for this research combined historical and theoretical research with contemporary qualitative ethnographic methods. A literature review focused on examining the historical background of *seungmu,* Korean dance aesthetics, and Korean Buddhism was conducted throughout Fall 2020 and Spring 2021, with emphasis on the impact of modernity and Japanese imperialism on the evolution of *seungmu* throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Sources for this literature review included newspaper articles, program notes from professional *seungmu* performances, interviews with renowned *seungmu* masters, as well as the scholarly works of Judy Van Zile, Hwansoo Kim, and Yeounsuk Lee, among others.

Fieldwork for this research consisted of semi-structured interviews with *seungmu* practitioners and firsthand participation in *seungmu* classes that took place in Busan, South Korea during June and July of 2021, during the challenging months of the COVID-19 pandemic. My interviews included professional dancers of ages ranging from their late 20s to early 60s, a musician who professionally accompanies *seungmu* performances, as well as multiple *seungmu* teachers. I also participated in ten hours of instruction in *seungmu* with an experienced and talented *seungmu* dancer, Jung Soyeon. Recognizing the importance of embodied knowledge in dance, my participant observation as a *seungmu* student was integral to supplementing my theoretical knowledge and historical research into the aesthetic values of Korean dance.

My journal of fieldnotes recording my participant-observation reflections was influenced by Sally Ann Ness' observation of ethnographic work as "inherently in motion, unfinishable, partially true, in James Clifford's terms

committed and incomplete."[2] My firsthand embodied experience of this new dance style contributed to observations that were both valuable, in revealing insights from an outsider positionality, and limited, in the inability to recognize potential nuances of the dances that more experienced participants would be able to extract.

Historical Background

The specifics of *seungmu's* origins in Korea are debated among temples, but scholars generally agree that it was first popularized during the sixteenth century when it was performed outside of temples.[3] This occurred as a survival tactic and an attempt to both proselytize Buddhism and gain financial support during a period of significant deprivation.[4]

Indeed, the whole of the Joseon Dynasty (1398–1910) saw a continued stigmatization of Buddhism in Korea. This was prompted when Buddhism lost its status as Korea's state religion during the preceding Koryo Dynasty (918–1392) to the new state orthodoxy of Neo-Confucianism.[5] At this time, Buddhism was labeled an unsavory competitor to national development and the promotion of Neo-Confucian social engineering among the Korean populace. As a result, Buddhist monks were forced to relocate from their urban temples to the mountains and banned from entering the capital of Seoul, among other social control regulations.[6]

The institutionalized social stigma against Korean Buddhist monastics through the Joseon period contributed to what Hwansoo Kim identifies as a "laicization of the monastic community" coupled with a "monasticization of the lay community."[7] In other words, there were few prominent monastic leaders as many tried to conceal their status by adopting lay behaviors, such as growing their hair and taking wives.[8] Additionally, there was a general absence of a committed lay community, who were discouraged from committing to the religion due to stigmatization of Buddhist monastics as "deviant, parasitic,

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2 Sally Ann Ness, "Dancing in The Field: Notes from Memory," in *Corporealities: Dancing Knowledge, Culture and Power*, (London: Routledge, 2004), 129–54.

3 Younghee Kim, "*Seungmu's* Future and *Seungmu's* Past." *Korea Dance Webzine*, 2014. http://www.koreadance.kr/board/board_view.php?view_id=19&board_name=research&page=5.

4 Yeounsuk Lee, "The Transition of the Monk's Dance (Sŭngmu) from Ritual Dance to Folk Art in Modern Korea to 1945." Hitotsubashi University, December 2019. https://doi.org/10.15057/30923.

5 Woncheol Yun, and Beom Seok Park, "Responses of Korean Buddhism to the Ethos of Contemporary Korea: Three Discourses in the Wake of Modernization." *Religions* 10, no. 1 (January 2019): 6, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel10010006.

6 Yun and Park, "Responses of Korean Buddhism to the Ethos of Contemporary Korea," 6.

7 Hwansoo Kim, "Social Stigmas of Buddhist Monastics and the Lack of Lay Buddhist Leadership in Colonial Korea (1910–1945)," *Korea Journal* 54, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 105–32.

8 Kim, "Social Stigmas of Buddhist Monastics."

superstitious, and heretical."[9] Korean Buddhist communities had little power to maintain their practices once the Japanese colonial government took over in 1910. Korean Buddhism entered the twentieth century as a weakened collective, causing *seungmu's* reclassification as a secular folk dance to elevate its status.

Although some institutional restrictions on Buddhist monastic activities lightened during the Japanese colonial period, the Korean Buddhist community was overwhelmed by pressures to assimilate their practices to reflect Japanese Buddhism as well as defer to the rising influence of Christianity in the country.[10] The Japanese colonial government employed rigorous efforts to support the westernization and modernization of Korean cultural practices. Any traditional practices of Korean culture, including religious rituals, cultural symbols, or other factors of Korean identity deemed as obstacles to the modernization process were appraised as "outdated evils" that were "subject to eradication" through any means.[11] Likewise, the philosophy of Buddhism was degraded as an antiquated folk religion in favor of the "modern" practice of Christianity.[12]

Before the Japanese colonial period, the overall structure of the monk's dance had been dynamic, allowing performance elements to be added, removed, and adapted over time and across regions.[13] The Japanese authorities discarded this variation in favor of systematization, however, and only the modernized version of *seungmu* was allowed for public performance.[14] The trends of *seungmu* in the modern era saw the casual and impromptu elements gradually reduced and replaced by a set of dance techniques "guided by principles of modernity."[15]

In the 1930s, moreover, the religious elements of *seungmu* were further minimized in favor of elements that prioritized entertainment for the masses.[16] In addition, proscenium-style stages were introduced, which necessitated many folk forms to adapt their presentation to suit new spaces and audiences.[17] Across the country, dancers rearranged traditional dances for

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9 Kim, "Social Stigmas of Buddhist Monastics," 110.

10 Yun and Park, "Responses of Korean Buddhism to the Ethos of Contemporary Korea."

11 Yun and Park, "Responses of Korean Buddhism to the Ethos of Contemporary Korea."

12 Yun and Park, "Responses of Korean Buddhism to the Ethos of Contemporary Korea."

13 Lee, "The Transition of the Monk's Dance (Sŭngmu) from Ritual Dance to Folk Art in Modern Korea to 1945."

14 Lee, "The Transition of The Monk's Dance (Sŭngmu) From Ritual Dance to Folk Art in Modern Korea to 1945."

15 Lee, "The Transition of The Monk's Dance (Sŭngmu) From Ritual Dance to Folk Art in Modern Korea to 1945," 21.

16 Lee, "The Transition of The Monk's Dance (Sŭngmu) From Ritual Dance to Folk Art in Modern Korea to 1945."

17 Younghee Kim, "Professional Folk Dances of Korea," in *Dance of Korea*, (Seoul, Korea: National Gugak Center, 2014), 155–68.

the modern stage, started schools, and worked to preserve the dance forms.[18] Many worked to raise traditional Korean dances to the aesthetic standards of Western dance to maintain their practice, and many traditional dances once linked to cultural or religious contexts "as part of a total art experience — had now become a more focused and specialized independent art work."[19] Therefore, dances like *seungmu*, with intrinsically religious origins and contexts, had to adapt to modern pressures in order to remain in practice. In short, dances were secularized to survive.

Subsequently, when Korea finally achieved independence from Japan in 1945 and then emerged from the Korean War (1950–1953), *seungmu* was further standardized to achieve designation as an Intangible Cultural Property. Among the most influential figures in refashioning *seungmu* during the latter half of the twentieth century was Yi Maebang. His version of the monk's dance gained wide popularity and public support.[20] In Yi's version, he removed almost all remaining Buddhist characters from the monk's dance and instead added what has been described as "coquettish elements."[21] Furthermore, Yi's monk's dance was marked by a more solemn tone overall.

Like all the properties that earned recognition as an Intangible Cultural Property, *seungmu* became an important site of rebuilding the nation and Korean identity after Japanese colonialism. Through considerable standardization efforts in the latter half of the twentieth century, the most popular concert performances of *seungmu* came to emphasize ideal aesthetic qualities found in Korean dance, as well as include movements recognizable across a variety of Korean folk dances.[22] This made it an irrefutable asset to the list of Intangible Cultural Properties and an appropriate form to uplift as representative of both Korean history and values. Two standardized versions of *seungmu* are formally recognized today; both identify *seungmu* as a folk dance, with no extant religious meaning.[23]

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18 Kim, "Professional Folk Dances of Korea."

19 Kim, "Professional Folk Dances of Korea," 157.

20 Lee, "The Transition of The Monk's Dance (Sŭngmu) From Ritual Dance to Folk Art in Modern Korea to 1945."

21 Lee, "The Transition of The Monk's Dance (Sŭngmu) From Ritual Dance to Folk Art in Modern Korea to 1945."

22 Lee, "The Transition of The Monk's Dance (Sŭngmu) From Ritual Dance to Folk Art in Modern Korea to 1945."

23 Kim, "*Seungmu's* Future and *Seungmu's* Past."

Theoretical Analysis

Japan's efforts to secularize Korea's premodern religious dance forms align with Max Weber's notion of the "disenchantment" of the modern world. This late-nineteenth and early twentieth century phenomenon saw an increasing focus on rationalism and science over religion and the supernatural, particularly in the Western world and regions influenced by it.[24]

Ironically, it was Japan's destructive modernization process that ultimately led to Korea's post-colonial, post-war emphasis on standardizing, preserving, and honoring cultural assets through the Intangible Cultural Property system. Paradoxically, South Korea's Office of Cultural Properties (OCP), which oversees the identification, legislation, reconstruction, and preservation of Korean "national treasures," is modeled on the very same system of their former oppressors.[25] That is, beginning in 1916, the Japanese imperial government, through their department of Heritage Management, developed criteria for identifying, classifying, and numbering "Korean national treasures."[26] For their purposes, the designation of these treasures was valuable for contrasting them to Japanese cultural practices, positioning them as antiquated in contrast to the ideal and modern cultural developments of Japan, in addition to "modernizing" such treasures to fit their standards.

However, these systems of identifying and sequencing cultural treasures developed by Japanese colonial forces continue to be used in the classification of Korean cultural properties by the OCP to this day. The cultural historian Hyung Il Pai argues that the OCP consciously emulated Japanese models to establish the "cultural legitimacy" of Korea's patrimony, especially by including the category for "intangible cultural properties" that was added in 1967.[27] Thus, the modern operations of the OCP in Korea present a paradox: the very system they are using to construct Korean identity, which is supported by South Korean scholars and bureaucrats, accepts their Japanese colonizers criteria for evaluating Korea's cultural traditions.[28] As a result, the very system that was designed to disenchant Korea of its religious traditions is ironically re-enchanting it today, for Korea is reclaiming its living national heritage through the system designed to preserve it only as an antiquated relic of the past. This is important to keep in mind when analyzing *seungmu*, whose standardized form is touted as an authentic representation of Korean

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24 Richard Jenkins, "Disenchantment, Enchantment and Re-Enchantment: Max Weber at the Millennium," *Max Weber Studies* 1, no. 1 (2000): 11–32, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24579711.

25 Hyung Il Pai, "The Creation of National Treasures and Monuments: The 1916 Japanese Laws on the Preservation of Korean Remains and Relics and Their Colonial Legacies," *Korean Studies* 25, no. 1 (2001): 72–95.

26 Pai, "The Creation of National Treasures and Monuments."

27 Pai, "The Creation of National Treasures and Monuments," 85.

28 Pai, "The Creation of National Treasures and Monuments," 86.

traditional culture as Intangible Cultural Property No. 27. Indeed, among the professional dancers that I interviewed, all agreed that modern *seungmu* is recognized as both one of the most technically challenging and most "Korean" of traditional Korean folk dances. The standardized form of the dance contains all of the defining aesthetic qualities of Korean dance outlined by dance scholar Judy Van Zile in her article "Aesthetics of Korean Dance: Concepts and Techniques." These include an emphasis on the use of breath, the quality of dynamic suspension, the connectedness of movement, verticality, doubling and rushing in movements, and asymmetry.[29] Notably, while Van Zile describes qualities that are generalized across Korean dance, *seungmu* incorporates them all. One of my interviewees summarized the high regard that Korean dancers have for *seungmu,* saying, "You can finally say that you can dance Korean dance only after you dance *seungmu*."

Based on the reinvention of *seungmu* under modern influences, coupled with its designation as a historical Korean form, some may call *seungmu* an "invented tradition."[30] However, I prefer to use the term "dynamic inheritance." Emily Wilcox, who introduced this term in the context of Chinese dance, identifies "dynamic inheritance" within traditions of dance that are constantly evolving through the additions and interpretations of new dancers.[31] This understanding allows for nuancing of the dichotomy that is often present in Euro-American conceptions of dance, in which dances seen as existing in a preserved form are labeled "traditional" while those that are seen as current or evolving are labeled "modern." Yet traditional forms continuously evolve and are performed in modern day, complicating these binaries. In the context of *seungmu,* its significant evolution throughout the last century can be appreciated more fully when this understanding is applied and dichotomous thinking about *seungmu*'s identity as either "authentic" or "contemporary" is avoided.

Its contemporary form is best understood as embodying multiple, contradictory identities. Research that challenges the Western concept of modernity and enchantment as binary categories has been particularly salient in post-colonial studies where these seemingly "universal" distinctions between modernity and tradition, or secularism and superstition, often do not hold up when viewed from non-Western cultures navigating processes of modernization in complex ways.[32]

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29 Judy Van Zile, "Aesthetics of Korean Dance: Concepts and Techniques," Academy of Korean Studies, 2016, 88–118.

30 Eric J. Hobsbawm, and Terence O. Ranger, eds. *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

31 Emily E Wilcox, "Dynamic Inheritance: Representative Works and the Authoring of Tradition in Chinese Dance," *Journal of Folklore Research* 55, no. 1 (2018): 77, https://doi.org/10.2979/jfolkrese.55.1.04.

32 Michael Saler, "Modernity and Enchantment: A Historiographic Review," *The American Historical Review* 111, no. 3 (June 1, 2006): 692–716, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr.111.3.692.

In the case of the monk's dance, *seungmu* was disenchanted from its religious origins and, in a sense, made into a representational object. Rather than functioning for spiritual purposes within and beyond Buddhist temples, it was co-opted to function as a symbol of Korean national identity and folk history. As a nation trying to establish legitimacy and formal markers of identity following a tumultuous period of cultural loss and geographic division, it stands to reason that Korea's OCP leaned into "disenchanted" cultural properties in order for them to be presented with greater mass appeal and legitimacy as cultural symbols rather than religious rituals. As a result, only the name of the "monk's dance," its costume, and the presence of a Buddhist drum still reveal its religious influences today, although professional dancers themselves hint at deeper connections.

Ethnography: *Seungmu* as Personally Spiritual in a Secular Context

The formal disassociation of *seungmu* from its religious origins does not mean that contemporary performers view the dance as exclusively secular. In fact, my research found the very opposite to be true. While modern practitioners do reinforce that *seungmu* performances today are not *meant* to be seen as religious, my interviews with *seungmu* dancers and teachers revealed the ways that it retains elements of its Buddhist origins and, for several, still serves a spiritual purpose.

Each of my informants held a deep reverence for *seungmu* that stemmed from both an appreciation of its difficulty as well as its ties to Korean history and identity. To these contemporary dancers, the most noteworthy aspect of monk's dance had little to do with its connection to Buddhism and more to do with its uniquely Korean and distinctly challenging aesthetics and techniques. A veteran dancer of more than forty years, Raehun Jang, stated that "It's like...if you mastered *seungmu*, you've mastered all of the Korean dance." Those I spoke with were clear that professional *seungmu* today "has changed drastically" since the Joseon Dynasty and Japanese occupation. In their own understanding, "It became more modernized. It became less religious... It's not considered to be a religious dance anymore."

Despite this, my interviewees revealed personal religious/spiritual connections to the dance. For example, one of the questions I asked my interviewees was when they began learning *seungmu*. One of my interviewees, a 37-year-old freelance dancer, explained that she started learning *seungmu* in her early childhood because her family was Buddhist and thus, it was natural for her to go to the temple where she was first exposed to temple *seungmu*. Admittedly, temple *seungmu* is different from professional, standardized *seungmu*, but for this interviewee, her introduction to the dance was a religious one. In her opinion, she stated "I think *seungmu* came from religion. But it has been redefined."

For another interviewee, *seungmu* held a more intentional spiritual meaning. He stated:

> In my opinion, of course, *seungmu* is a part of Buddhism...When I learned (from Yi Maebang), I was told that *seungmu* is all about 'transcendence.' So... I would say that 70–80% of *Seungmu* relies on the spirit of Buddhism. The [other] 20–30% of it relies on each individual dancer.

This interpretation directly contradicts official contemporary descriptions of the monk's dance, which adamantly define it as a secular folk dance. This interviewee was notable because he was the oldest person I was able to interview, at sixty years old. I do think that age impacts the perspective that dancers have on *seungmu*, allowing them to deeply recognize the pressures against its preservation and practice in the last century. Furthermore, this dancer was a student of Yi Maebang, the influential dancer behind *seungmu*'s standardization in the 1960s. Combining these factors, this dancer was able to expand his experience with *seungmu* beyond the merely secular, aesthetic, or emotional one and more deeply connect it to the spirit of Buddhism that he believes remains in the dance.

Another professional dancer I spoke to recalled that she was instructed by her teachers to dance *seungmu* as a personal journey through one's own struggles. In many ways, this fits with the structure of the dance. Within *seungmu*, the dancer must navigate through several rhythmic sections. It begins solemnly and slowly, with a steady rhythm and, generally, the speed and energy of movements progressively increases throughout. The dance climaxes in an extended drumming section performed by the dancer, before achieving the peaceful catharsis of the resolution. This journey could indeed be interpreted as the symbolic triumph over struggles for an individual.

Yet this secularized explanation glosses over one of the common explanations for *seungmu's* original intention. This explanation recognizes the "plot" of *seungmu* as an educational performance for non-Buddhist and lay Buddhist audiences alike. Many scholars recognize that the five sections of *seungmu*'s structure metaphorically portray the Buddhist understanding of life — from birth into a world in which one must conquer the three root evils of greed, ignorance, and hatred; to experiencing temptation and hardships; to ultimately achieving the peaceful release of *nirvana*.[33]

My interviewees and teacher would also inevitably begin describing aspects of *seungmu* with spiritual language. The first section of *seungmu* is called *yeombul*. To begin this section, the dancer begins in a deep bow and slowly

33 Kim, "*Seungmu's* Future and *Seungmu's* Past."; Hyowon Lee, "*Seungmu*: Seon Meditation Through Dance," *The Korea Times*, July 22, 2010. https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/culture/2021/12/293_69954.html.

rises, twisting the torso and raising the arms. My instructor, Soyeon, noted to me that the dancer's breathing during *yeombul* should "feel like a meditation," and these dramatic beginning movements should be "like the dawning of heaven and earth." Meditation as a descriptor is not inherently Buddhist and, especially in the modern day, can be separated from the spiritual meaning to refer more broadly to practices of mindfulness. However, in the context of this section of *seungmu*, it takes on a spiritual connotation that is difficult to ignore.

Yeombul is a Korean term that exists in the context of the Pure Land Buddhist practice. It refers to the repetition of the name of Amita Buddha (Skt. Amitābha/Amitāyus) with the goal of relieving karmic burdens and calming the mind.[34] In the monk's dance, this section also occurs in tandem with the tapping of the *moktak*, a wooden percussion instrument essential in the morning temple rituals of Korean Buddhist monks.[35] The dancer is meant to breathe deeply in a deep bow facing a dharma drum, another element derived from Buddhism, before rising with the first crescendo of sound, opening their arms, and twisting their torso as if bowing to Buddha.[36] Soyeon emphasized that the breathing in this specific part must be meditative and be used to clear one's mind before they begin the physically and mentally demanding thirty minute solo dance. It was clear to me in my lessons that extant elements of *seungmu* remain heavily influenced by Buddhism, despite formal protestations for *seungmu's* modern secular identity.

It also became clear that Soyeon was a dancer who interpreted personal spiritual benefit from *seungmu*. At one of my lessons, I asked her how she has persisted with professional *seungmu* dance for so long since it is so difficult and taxing on the body. She replied, after some thought, that her relationship with *seungmu* went beyond its aesthetic value; if she felt mentally stuck or burdened in her life, she found dancing *seungmu* to be restorative and healing, in ways deeper than physical. *"Seungmu,"* she said, "is not just a pretty dance, but a dance for the inside."

Conclusion

The results of this research suggest that the distancing of *seungmu* from a religious identity have not erased the lingering spiritual elements that continue to inform modern practitioners' understanding and embodiment of the dance. This research joins the conclusions of various historians and scholars who have driven discourse challenging the assumption that the

34 Research Institute for Buddhist Studies. Buddhist English: Elementary 2. Translated by Golden Lotus Translation Center. Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism, 2014.

35 Sahn Seung, and Hae Sunim Chong, "What Is a Moktak?" Lion's Roar: Buddhist Wisdom for Our Time (blog), December 1, 2003. https://www.lionsroar.com/dharma-dictionary-moktak/.

36 Lee, "*Seungmu*: Seon Meditation Through Dance."

modern world has been disenchanted, replacing spirituality with secularism.[37] Given these combined insights from interviews with current practitioners and my experience learning the form, I argue that *seungmu* remains influenced by and understood in relation to its Buddhist origins, at the very least, at an individual level.

As noted by Michael Saler, current "academic culture [is] permeated with a postmodern skepticism toward binary distinctions," and the conclusions of this research are no different.[38] It challenges multiple potential modern assumptions that dance must be *either* religious or secular, either authentic or contemporary, and either enchanted or modern. My research concludes with antinomial understandings, recognizing *seungmu's* complex modern form as embracing "both/and" identities rather than "either/or"; for *seungmu*, its modern identity is multifaceted. While this research challenges the assertions that the *seungmu* seen today is understood as completely secular, this does not impact the value of the modern practice of the form. The *seungmu* practitioners I interacted with experienced a great deal of value from their practice of modern, standardized *seungmu* both despite and because of its relationship to Buddhism.

37 Saler. "Modernity and Enchantment: A Historiographic Review."

38 Saler. "Modernity and Enchantment: A Historiographic Review," 703.

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