

A Study on the Choreography of Sagunja Using Laban's Theory

– Focusing on the Effort Factors –

Yi, Joo Won* · Kim, Taeyeon**

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I. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore the visual inspiration of Sagunja (painting of four gentlemen) and the choreography method using Laban's Effort Factors. With the rise of K-culture, traditional Korean painting is gaining attention. The popularity of "K-pop Demon Hunters" has led to 4.3 million visitors to the National Museum of Korea as of August.¹⁾ Accordingly, interest in traditional Korean relics appears to have increased not only overseas but also domestically. In fact, not only relics and goods of the National Museum of Korea, but also private companies are introducing items inspired by traditional paintings. Fueled by this interest, it can be suspected that a choreography method devised based on traditional Korean painting will attract attention and interest as a new choreography method most relevant to current trend.

While there are various methods of choreography, some are inspired by paintings. This method is particularly evident in Europe, which the researcher experienced while I was a masters student in the Korea National University of Arts. The researcher attended a choreography class conducted by Kay Patru, a Dutch dancer. At that time, the method that the researcher had learned tended to be one of

* First author, Visiting Researcher at Institute of Sport Science, Chungnam National University

** Corresponding Author, Creative Director, Serene K-ART (Minhwa) by artist Tenny K, tennykimty@gmail.com

1) Referenced from Hye Won Jeong(2025, September 10). "The 'Kedeheon' Syndrome Brings a Renaissance of Traditional Culture". *Asia Today*. <<https://www.asiatoday.co.kr/kn/view.php?key=20250910010005217>, 2025. 10. 13>.

spontaneous instinctive and improvisational movements based on inspiration, but it seemed that choreographers needed more specific choreographic methods that applied relevant theory. There were some cases where Korean domestic choreographers were inspired by foreign paintings to create works.

This research was conducted in thoughts that it would be more meaningful for Korean choreographers to develop a method inspired by traditional Korean paintings rather than foreign works. Furthermore, this approach could lead to the creation of choreographies that embody traditional Korean paintings and Korean sentiments.

It is necessary to develop a choreography method that includes Korean culture. One way to achieve that would be to develop Korean traditional dance, but it is difficult for foreigners to fully master it without mastering basic breathing and movement. There are already existing Korean dance works choreographed on the subject of Sagunja, but this study focuses on devising the choreography method not bound to specific genre. This choreography method can be implied to all dance genres such as Korean traditional dance, contemporary dance and even ballet. This study aims to provide choreographers, both domestic and international, with an opportunity to immerse themselves in Korean culture and present a choreographic method that transcends genres. That is, this study applies Laban's theory to the Sagunja to devise a genre-free choreography method.

The preceding studies of this study can be categorized into two main categories: one, a study on a choreography method inspired by painting; two, is a study on a choreography method applying Laban's theory. The first, a study on choreography inspired by painting, is Portnova's(2018) study on the structure of dance dramaturgy utilizing painting. Portnova focused on the interrelationship between painting and choreography, arguing that their interaction is based on the adaptation of painting, the realization of imagery, and the borrowing of painting styles. While this study suggested the possibility of using painting to construct and adapt dance plots, it did not provide specific choreographic methods. This research varies from the previous studies in that it investigates how to compose choreography by applying choreographic theory to painting.

Prior research on choreographic composition using Laban's theory includes Sang Mi Shin's(2011) study on choreographic composition using spatial harmony theory. Shin focused on spatial harmony theory within Laban's theory, arguing that choreography can be achieved by utilizing scales in dodecahedral space. This study agrees with the assertion that applying Laban's theory can systematically create choreography. Although the dynamics of choreography can be achieved by employing various movements utilizing the theory of spatial harmony, this study attempts to apply the Effort Factors in structuring a choreography composition method as it is more sufficient to emotional expressions rather than dynamic. This study is similar in that it applied Laban's theory, but it distinguishes from previous studies since it was inspired by Sagunja.

Jaelee Kim(2005) conducted a study on choreography composition methods using Laban movement analysis theory, and applied all aspects of Laban movement analysis elements, such as body, effort, shape, and space, to the creative process. Such research is only possible if dancers have an in-depth understanding of Laban's theory. However, this study was predetermined to be too complex to apply all aspects of Laban movement analysis theory, so only the concept of effort was utilized. Therefore, although this study makes a similar claim that choreography can be applied by applying Laban's theory, it differs from previous studies in that it utilizes the inspiration of Sagunja. It also differs from previous studies in terms of choreography motivation and method.

This study has limitations, including its focus on the Sagunja in traditional Korean painting and only implementing the Effort Factors in Laban's theory. However, this limitation was intentionally structured to ensure the specificity of choreographic composition. Furthermore, this study has the limitation that the researcher's subjectivity is unavoidable as it is a study on choreography. To address this limitation, the validity of the results was assessed by two dance experts and one traditional painting expert.

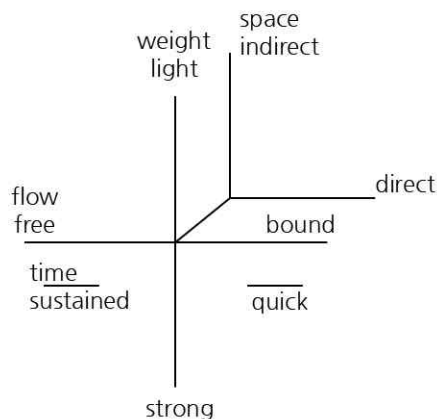
This study was conducted as a practice-based study, a practical practice processes including literature research and self-reflection. Practice-based research on the creative process involves reflective introspection. Chapter II provides the theoretical background and discusses the concepts of traditional Korean painting and Sagunja, as well as choreography and documentation. In Chapter III, the choreographic elements were analyzed, then the application of choreographic composition and the derived results were discussed. In the final Chapter IV, implications and suggestions obtained from these results are presented. This study is notable in that it presents a choreography that encompasses both the East and the West, which may serve as basic data for the advancement of a choreography that utilizes inspiration from traditional Korean painting.

II. Laban's Theory and Dance Notation

The word choreography is derived from the word 'Choreosophia,' which means 'circle (Choreo) and wisdom (Sophia)', and was used to mean 'recording dance'(Sang Mi Shin, 2011, p. 61). As such, recording dance in choreography is of significant significance, and contemporary choreography is used in a wide range of ways, from simply creating dance sequences to recording them by applying dance theory. Accordingly, choreography methods and choreography theories are being developed in various ways. Nahyun Lee(2025, p. 22) argued that contemporary choreography should pursue new discoveries and refrain from habitual movements. Convergent thinking rather than dwelling in the existing choreography method is required to the talent of this contemporary era. It is necessary to

implement from the existing method, but finding a new choreography composition method is a must not a choice. Exploring triggers widening the dancer's spectrum(Joohee Jung, Naye Kim, 2023, pp. 108-109).

In this study, two major choreographic theories were applied: Laban's effort and dance notation. First, there is the utilization of the Effort Factors in Laban's movement analysis. Rudolf von Laban(1879-1958) was a dance theorist and the founder of Labanotation, a method for recording movement. Laban conducted research on effort-shape and space harmony, which form the basis of Laban Movement Analysis (LMA)(Sang Mi Shin, Jaelee Kim, 2010, pp. 21-22). LMA analyzes the movement by analyzing the body, the effort, the shape, and the space, and this method can be applied to movement choreography. It can be analyzed into a body that structurally performs the movement, an effort which is a motive or an emotion of movement, a space where movement occurs and a shape of movement. In this study, only the Effort Factors applied among these four. There were two reasons for this decision. One, expressing the Korean spirit appeared important to express the emotions of Korean painting. Two, Laban's Effort Factors was the most adequate tool to express emotions, which are an element of the spirit. Laban's effort graph is as shown in <Figure 1>.



<Figure 1> Laban's Effort graph figure²⁾

The Effort Factor's speed effect can be categorized as a sudden rapid movement (quick) and a slow continuation of movement (sustained). Space effect can be categorized as a direct space to focus on one thing and an indirect space to spread focus. The flow effect can be categorized as a free effect and a bound effect. And the weight effect can be categorized as heavy down being a strong weight, an upward being a light weight.

Second, there's the dance notation method. Raoul Feuillet(1660-1710), considered the pioneer of

2) Referenced from Sang Mi Shin & Jaelee Kim(2010). Reading the Body and Movement: Theory and Practice of Laban Movement Analysis. Hanyoung Cultural Publishing Co. (p.84).

dance notation, introduced a 17th-century notation system and used a universal language to ensure its wide use(Suein Kim, 2010, p. 21). In this way, dance, a temporal art form mediated by the body, must be recorded in a concise yet clear form. Furthermore, Feuillet's notation went beyond recording dance and served as a creative tool(Kisub Choi, 2019, p. 325). This resonates with the essence of choreography. The term 'score' refers to musical notation, while in dance, it refers to dance notation. And Labanotation, developed by Laban, is considered a representative notation method. It can be said that Laban was influenced by Feuillet's notation, and Labanotation can be seen as a representative method of choreographic scores. Labanotation possesses the advantages of being scientific and systematic. However, it may be considered somewhat difficult for those who have not mastered Laban's theory, and it takes quite a long time to master Laban's theory, which is a disadvantage.

Choreography is interpreted as 'writing dance,' and documenting dance is crucial in choreography. In other words, choreography can be defined as creating and documenting dance, using their own rules, even if they don't necessarily utilize someone else's notation. That is, in contemporary dance, various notations are freely utilized without being bound by any form. As a matter of course, using a universal language is recommended, but even if that is not possible, it is meaningful to record choreographic data. Kisook Cho(2014, pp. 46-47) argued the importance of recording somatic data, which describes the bodily sensations experienced by the performer while dancing. In this way, contemporary choreography can record the process of choreography not only through records of bodily sensations such as somatic data, but also through the choreographer's reflective reflection. Choreography notes used in performances are excellent raw data in practice-based research. However, the choreography notes in a practice-based research differentiates itself from notes of performances as it reflects the dance researcher's subjective first-person perspective(Kisook Cho, 2014, p. 43). This indicates the importance of the researcher participating in the actual practice, recording the data and analyzing the data. As such, somatic data is frequently used in practice-based studies. Moreover, practice-based studies can be applied not only to discuss the results, but also to discuss the process of choreography. In order for such subjective practice-based research to be effectively discussed, the researcher's practical experience, reflection, and theoretical basis must be taken under consideration(Jindeok Park, 2025, p.66). Therefore, this study will record reflective introspections that can serve as somatic data for choreography and discuss the results.

III. Conceptual Framework: Sagunja

It is essential for us to understand the difference of Eastern (oriental) art and Korean art in this research as we are focusing mainly on Korean art. Eastern art refers to art mainly led by the Chinese

art that includes both Korean and Japanese art; whilst Korean art refers to art that portrays the Korean spirit(Young Pil Kwon, 1995, p. 15).

Traditional Korean art can be classified into two big categories: Sumukhwa (ink painting) and Chaesaekhwa (color painting). In Sumukhwa, objects are portrayed using the muk (solid black ink made of soot and animal glue); while in Chaesaekhwa, objects are portrayed using different pigments. Muk is an important ingredient in Korean art as with this single medium so much can be portrayed in so much depth with brush strokes, shades, ink density and texture. In Korean art, subjects are portrayed by soaking muk on paper (hanji). Naturally, a crisp precision with a traditional brush can be challenging. However, this is not an issue as Korean art focuses less on depiction but emphasizes the symbolic meaning of the subjects. Painting was a method to communicate, introspect and self-cultivate. Therefore, symbolism had to be a common knowledge among noblemen. Yi Ding, Kyung Hoon Kim, Jung Suk Lee(2013, p. 4) too argue how Korean painters tried to endow meaning into the subjects; as so each plant of Sagunja (painting of four gentlemen) had a different meaning and that was more important than whether the plants were accurately depicted.

Sagunja, the focus of this research, is one of the most often depicted subjects in Sumukhwa. It portrays the four gracious plants: plum blossom, orchid, chrysanthemum and bamboo, which symbolizes the spirit and virtue of Korean noblemen from the scholar class. The Attribute of Sagunja can be discussed in four ways.

The first attributes are seasonality (four seasons) and Korean spirit (symbolism). Each plant of Sagunja represents a different season due to their unique characteristics, symbolizing different virtues: plum blossom, spring, orchid, summer, chrysanthemum, autumn, and bamboo, winter. Plum blossom is the first flower to bloom in early spring when the weather is still chilly. Plum blossom buds ready steadily, but bloom wide open very quickly, making plum blossom symbolize resilience, the spirit to overcome hardships, the courage to endure and hope. A flower may first come to mind in orchid. However, the leaves mattered more, representing moral integrity, noble virtue, purity and loyalty. Drawing leaves was an exercise of self-discipline, best described by a Korean term, “chi-da,” meaning to hit or beat. This is used only in orchid painting highlighting inner cultivation. Stead control of the brush strokes and seamless expression of the leaves were considered ways to reach one’s deeper thoughts. During summer, only the stem and the leaves of Chrysanthemum grow, but once cool breeze blows, its flowers bloom instantly. It is the last flower to bloom in late autumn, representing perseverance, nobility, clarity, seclusion and humility. Bamboo stays evergreen and upright in all seasons. Its hollow stalk withstands harsh weather and may yield to wind but never break, resembling uprightness, persistence, acceptance and flexibility.

Sagunja represents Korean spirits and virtues valued by noblemen, and there are exact guidelines on how to portray the plants. Every flower, branch, and leaf should look different from those next to each

other but must coexist naturally. A bamboo must be straight and rigid, and the brush strokes need to be constant in all the stalks. Leaves need to be drawn hastily with no hesitation to complete the seamless flow. This again emphasizes the importance of mental discipline by heading towards perfection and training oneself to be precise and meticulous with self-control.

The second attribute is the form of brush strokes (dot, line, surface). A dot is where the artwork begins. It is then elongated into a line drawing the shape of the subject, which is then widened into a surface, painting the form of the subject. Firm lines portrayed branches, flower stems and bamboo stalks. Curve lines were used to portray flower petals and orchid leaves. The surface was drawn by widening the painting area. These brush strokes restricted which area (space) in hanji will be filled with muk.

The third attribute is shading. Light and dark were portrayed by controlling the amount of muk and water. Lighter areas were portrayed with more water added to muk, allowing it to spread widely into hanji more naturally and freely, portraying a lighter shade. On the contrary, denser muk spread less on hanji, limiting its boundaries, portraying darker shade.

The fourth attribute is spatial adaptation. One might see Sagunja as a beautiful yet simple depiction of four plants. However, the true value of Sagunja does not lie in portraying the plants but in communicating the Eastern philosophy. “The order of spring (plum blossom), summer (orchid), autumn (chrysanthemum) and winter (bamboo), refers to the change of time, and it is also a recurring flow of yin and yang in the unchangeable space (East, South, West, North). Sagunja unites space and time into one dimension”(Yoon Kyong Ha & Hey Kyoung Kim, p. 163). All things in the universe are in constant circulation. The four seasons and the four spaces all display a cycle that cannot be stopped. Accordingly, our energy (yin and yang) circulates, making one gain heated energy to motion from the sun at times of yang and gain cool energy find peace of mind and rest from the moon at times of yin.

And the last attribute is blank space. Blank space is a unique characteristic of Korean art, intentionally leaving the background empty for the viewers to limitlessly imagine(Kyongsang Noh, 1997, p. 58) beyond what is portrayed. It also gives room for one to immerse themselves in the subject and savor the meaning of what the subjects symbolize.

IV. Choreographic Analysis

1. Analysis of choreographic elements

From a discussion with a Korean traditional visual arts expert and the researcher, discovered five characteristics of Sagunja: seasonality, form, light and shade, spatial adaptation, and blank space, which are analyzed as shown in <Table 1> below.

<Table 1> Analysis of the characteristics of Sagunja

	Seasonality	Form	light and shade	spatial adaptation	blank space
Plum blossom	Spring	Line → Surface	Dark in the middle and gradually lighter towards the edges.	Changing Yang	Infinite space
Orchid	Summer	Line	Thick lines are dark and thin lines are light.	Changing Yin	Infinite space
Chrysanthemum	Autumn	Line → Surface	The contrast is strong.	Young Yang	Infinite space
Bamboo	Winter	Line	The bamboo stalk is light and the leaves that extend out are dark.	Young Yin	Infinite space

The plum blossom is a flower that blooms in spring, and the formative characteristics of the painting are composed of lines to surfaces, and the center is thick and becomes thinner towards the edge. Spatial adaptation is an expression of yin and yang, portrayed through the brush. Changing Yang signifies the fullness of yang energy. Orchids represent summer, and their formal characteristics are composed of lines. They are composed of thick and thin lines, and their spatial adaptation is Changing Yin with prominent blank spaces. Chrysanthemums represent autumn. The formal characteristics are composed of lines and planes, and the contrasts are often strong. Young Yang signifies the onset growth. Bamboo represents winter, and the portrayal of lines stand out. The bamboo stalks are pale, while the spreading leaves are expressed in bold black. Young Yin represents the subtle yin energy. Blank spaces can be interpreted as a space of infinite possibilities.

This study reconstructed <Table 2> by applying Laban's Effort Factors to the elements. These are choreographic components determined by applying Laban's Effort Factors that match the emotions and characteristics of Sagunja. Seasonality was selected as a sustained/sudden (or Quick) time effort, shape as a direct/indirect space effort, light and shade as a free/bound flow effort, and spatial adaptation as a strong/light weight effort. The choreographic components of this study are summarized in <Table 2> below.

<Table 2> Choreographic elements inspired by Sagunja and utilizing Laban's theory

	Time effort	Space effort	Flow effort	Weight effort	The choreographer's boundless imagination
Plum blossom	Sustained → sudden	Direct → indirect	Bound → free	Light	Infinite imagination
Orchid	Sudden & Quick	Direct	Bound and free alternate.	Strong	Infinite imagination
Chrysanthemum	Quick → Sustained	Direct → indirect	Bound	Light	Infinite imagination
Bamboo	Sustained	Direct	Free → Bound	strong	Infinite imagination

To express the seasonality of Sagunja, plants' vitality was interpreted as the time effort. As mentioned earlier, the seasons in Sagunja do not simply refer to the seasons. It is about overcoming environmental hardships or displaying strong willpower and courage. The plum blossom, spring, which blooms rapidly after withstanding winter, the choreography reflected this attribute: slow movement portraying the dormant period and fast movement portraying the bloom. To express orchid, summer, rapid movements were maintained to reflect its vitality. The chrysanthemums, autumn, was portrayed by fast movements continued with slow movements to express the energy decreasing towards winter. For bamboo, winter, slow movements were designated to portray its persistent energy despite the cold winter.

The formative elements were determined as spatial effort. The dancer was the standard of occupying space, and the dot was considered as a state of '0' zero in space, expanding it into lines and surfaces. Lines were designated as a direct space and a direct gaze, while surfaces were designated as an indirect space and a disturbance of the gaze.

Light and shade were determined as flow effect. Light was the free flow, and dark was the limited flow. Since plum blossom gradually becomes lighter towards the edge, it was choreographed to change from limited flow to free flow. In expressing orchid, thick lines were expressed in dark ink and thin lines are expressed in light ink, and this was choreographed to show alternating limited and free flow. Chrysanthemums were expressed with different ink tonalities that can be perceived as light and shade, so they were choreographed as a limited flow. Bamboo was expressed with light stalks and dark spreading leaves, so they were choreographed as a limited flow rather than a free flow.

Spatial adaptation was defined as weight effect. Plum blossoms are at the state of yang, depicted with a light effort rising and reaching high. Orchids are at the state of yin, depicted with a strong effort pointing down. Chrysanthemums are at the state of yang, depicted with a light effort pointing upward. Bamboo is at the state of yin, depicted with a strong effort pointing downward. Finally, blank space was perceived as infinite space and the choreographer's boundless imagination, adding the beauty of emptiness into choreography.

2. Expert Review

This research was carried out over a five-month period, from May 2, 2025, to October 15, 2025. The researcher is a choreographer who has directed and choreographed five works inspired by visual arts. Although this study was conducted with the advice of a professional traditional art painting expert, it was deemed necessary to ensure reliability and validity as the choreography was designed by one choreographer, the researcher. The choreography was revised and supplemented after the review and advice of two dance experts and one traditional visual arts expert. While expert review is often utilized in qualitative research, this study, focusing on choreography, can be considered closer to qualitative than quantitative, and thus, the expert review was conducted. According to Youngchun Kim(2016, pp. 599-600), verifying the validity of a researcher's interpretation and analysis, and providing complementary critiques of the researcher's ideas, can enhance the credibility of the research. Thus, expert review was conducted to secure the reliability and validity of this study.

A. Review by Dance Experts

The criteria for selecting dance experts for this study were, first, experts having at least 15 years of dance experience; second, experts must have creative experience inspired by dance and visual arts; third, experts were experienced in dance improvisation. Dance expert A has 17 years of experience as a dancer and studied abroad in Germany for one year. She has experience with visual arts-inspired improvisational dance in Germany. Dance expert B has 25 years of experience and graduated from university with a degree in choreography. She has been collaborating with visual artists since 2019 and continues to do so. The most important thing in selecting experts for this study was that they had practical experience and work experience in visual arts. This study conducted one creation based on practical dance and one interview for the review of dance experts. The dance experts were given as much time as they wanted for the dance practice-based creative work, and the interview lasted one hour per person.

Practice-based research was conducted in parallel with expert reviews based on this experience. The experts experienced the choreography of this study, then gave critiques on the choreographic process and advice on areas for improvement. The first step in the expert review process was for the dance experts to create a movement pattern inspired by Sagunja. The researcher believed that the inspiration dance experts received was important, so no separate explanation of the Sagunja was provided. Second, the dance experts created a dance while changing the movement patterns by applying the choreographic components designed in this study. Third, the dance experts provided the researcher with a review and advice on choreography composition methods utilizing the inspiration from the Sagunja and Laban's effort theory. Expert review was conducted in this order, and the questions to receive advice on choreography composition were as shown in <Table 3>.

<Table 3> Expert Review Questionnaire

Category	Details
Usefulness of choreography composition method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ What is the difference between moving inspired by Sagunja and applying the choreography method of this study? ▶ Do you think this choreography would be useful? ▶ What else was useful?
Improvements in choreography composition method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Are there any unclear parts in the choreography composition methods of this study? ▶ Are there any areas in the choreography composition methods that need improvement? ▶ Are there any areas in the choreography composition methods that need to be supplemented?
Utilization of choreography composition methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ To which age groups should the choreography composition method be applied? ▶ Does the choreography composition method seem applicable regardless of genre? ▶ Can the choreography composition method be applied to foreigners?
Other comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Answers to additional questions ▶ Somatic data when moving with the choreography composition method ▶ Additional comments and more

1) Usefulness of choreography composition method

This study questioned the usefulness of the choreographic composition method with the curiosity whether it could be applied to dancers other than the researchers themselves. In response to the question about the usefulness of the choreography composition method, a positive response was given. Dance expert A said that Sagunja felt close to the heart as a Korean, and she liked it because it seemed to bring out the Korean linear movements while creating the movements. She stated that when she created patterns based solely on the paintings, she often produced habitual movements, but when she applied the choreographic composition method in this study, she felt her movements expanded. She said that the extension of that movement was evident as the gaze expanded. Dance expert B stated that when she saw the images of Sagunja, she instinctively focused on visualizing the image, but when she applied the choreographic composition method in this study, she was able to focus on the texture of the movement. She also noted that while she could become too self-focused when choreographing, this method allowed her to focus on the movement. Dance expert B also mentioned the expandability of the gaze. Based on these opinions, this study concluded that choreographing after looking at Sagunja could help improvisational education or improvisational choreography as it allows immediate visualization of images. And Laban's Effort Factors is thought to be useful in diversifying the texture of movement and helping dancers break away from habitual movements.

2) Improvements in choreography composition method

Making improvements in choreography composition method is an important part of this study, but the researcher felt that one's own judgment on the areas for improvement was clouded as one practiced repeatedly alone. While the validity of this study required the input of dance experts, this

was also necessary to prevent the researcher's bias. Dance expert A advised that when applying this composition method to dancers, the choreographer's reasons for selecting Sagunja should be clearly explained. She also advised that explanation about Sagunja must be given as well for the dancers to bring out their emotions. Dance expert B mentioned how most of the initial movements seemed to be light-weighted as she was trying to portray plants growing. Therefore, she suggested an explanation of the analysis of yin and yang energy as weight effort. She believes that what the dancer tries to express is extremely important in choreography; and to draw out spontaneous movements, an in-depth explanation of Sagunja seems necessary. It was logical to conclude that an explanation of Sagunja and the choreography composition method is required to bring out inspiration.

3) Utilization of choreography composition methods

While choreographing with this study's choreographic composition method, the researcher felt it could be applied to education across a wide range of age groups. Therefore, questions regarding target groups were asked of the experts. Dance expert A suggested that this method would be suitable for seniors. Based on the opinions of dance expert A, it seemed that the seniors would have a good understanding of Korean paintings. Moreover, the plants' life cycle is not so different from human life cycle, making it suitable for elders. She suggested that contemporary dancers would benefit from this method. She stated that Korean dancers, often confined to their majors and performing standardized dances, lack opportunities to explore the texture of movement, and that they only gradually gain understanding after graduation. This suggests that Korea needs specific choreographic methods and curricula that foster a diverse range of movements.

Dance experts were positive about applying the choreography composition method of this study to foreign dancers, but dance expert A asserted that the key thing to bear in mind is that the choreographic intention and explanation need to be more specific. And dance expert B advised that it would be good to emphasize the texture of muk of Sagunja and add Korean breathing. Reflecting on this opinion, it seems she wasn't referring to traditional Korean movements, but rather to bends and curves, such as breathing when falling to the ground and breathing when reaching for the sky.

4) Other comments

Other comments refer to the expert's feelings and impressions to see if this study could collect somatic data. The dance expert's somatic data is as follows.

When I was first given instructions (about the choreography elements), my body immediately froze. But when I started to actual move, it seemed much more efficient. And if I recognized that and continued to practice it ... I felt like I would express more strength. So, as I moved, I felt like the movements within me became sharper (Dance expert A, 2025.09.30).

It was expected that the choreography composition method of this study may tend to be confusing for first-time attempters. First, many dancers likely have not experienced being inspired by Korean paintings. The more they moved, the more likely they understood Laban's Effort Factors with their bodies. This suggests that in dance, it is more important to understand the theory based on practical skills than to understand it in thoughts.

I feel like I'm breaking out from something. I want to use a fabric, which can bring out the texture of flowers, and put my arms or my head in it. That image just came to me ... This kind of resembled the real flower blooming and withering(Dance expert A, 2025.09.30).

From the expert interview, it was found that the choreography composition method was able to bring out various movements because it implemented Laban's effort theory. And it assured that combining practice-based research with the choreography composition method was a good judgment.

I felt something light-weighted or heavy-weighted from the painting... Then, I tried to portray it, but sometimes the textures differed, and I got a little confused ... (Dance expert B, 2025.10.01).

Texture seems tricky to express. I am familiar with lines because it is a common movement, but I wanted to express more weight. I wanted something a bit heavier and faster, but that requires a little more technical skill, which I believe is the dancer's competence. Therefore, it's a bit disappointing that I can't express the texture I want. It's a bit disappointing ... (Dance expert B, 2025.10.01).

Dance expert B had difficulty with the weight effort among the Effort Factors. And this study determined that there was a need to provide additional explanation of weight effort when choreographing through this process. And it is judged that technical training of the dancer is necessary to express strong and light in weight effort.

B. Review by a traditional visual arts expert

One traditional visual arts expert participated in the assessment of the characteristics and symbols of Sagunja in this study and has a deep understanding of this study. The traditional visual arts expert review was conducted for one hour after the practice-based review by dance experts to provide accurate advice. The main question posed to the traditional visual arts expert was about how to appreciate and be inspired by Korean paintings. The question was broadly divided into two categories: one focused on how to appreciate Sagunja, and the other on their symbolism. This is because, through practical review by dance experts, we have acquired that it is important to understand the Korean spirit expressed in Sagunja to dance.

As a response to the first question regarding how to appreciate the Sagunja, a traditional visual arts expert emphasized the importance of the subjects depicted in Sagunja. She stated that the objects depicted in Sagunja do not simply depict landscapes, but rather express the traditional beauty of plum blossoms, orchids, chrysanthemums, and bamboo. This means that it is difficult to express the spirit of Korea as reflected in the Sagunja by simply emphasizing the formative aspect. It is important to apprehend the spirit, integrity, and attitude of noblemen as shown in Sagunja.

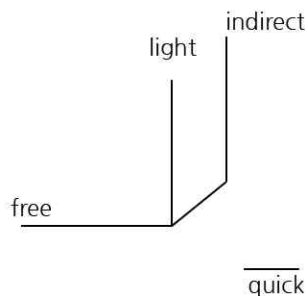
The researcher sought advice on how to appropriately express the symbolism of Sagunja. The traditional visual arts expert suggested that it would be beneficial to express the plants' experience of overcoming seasonal adversity, experience of enduring difficult situations, and beauty of persistence, although it may not be so fancy. The key takeaway was that storytelling is important. It is necessary to further mention the circumstances and ways in which Sagunja overcome adversity when composing the choreography for this study. This study will be developed and supplemented through expert review and the results will be discussed.

3. Result

The result of this study records three things. The first is the effort graph of plum blossom, orchid, chrysanthemum, and bamboo. The second is a step-by-step discussion regarding the choreography composition method revised through expert review. The third is somatic data containing the researcher's personal reflections.

A. Effort graph of Sagunja

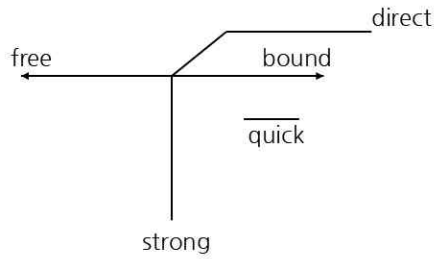
1) Plum blossom



<Figure 2>

The results of this study, effort graphs of Sagunja were obtained. This graph represents the effort graph of the plum blossom. The plum blossom was quick effort, indirect space effort, free flow effort, and light effort.

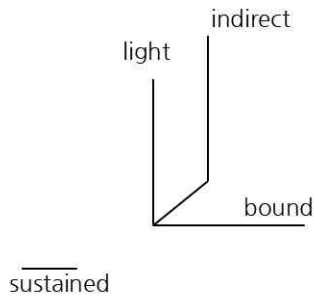
2) Orchid



<Figure 3>

This graph is an effort graph of an orchid. It shows fast effort, direct space effort, repetition of bound and free flow effort, and strong weight effort.

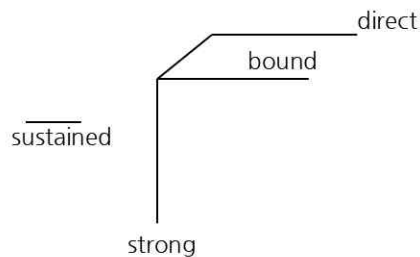
3) Chrysanthemum



<Figure 4>

This graph is the effort graph of chrysanthemum. Chrysanthemums are revealed to have slow effort, indirect space effort, and bound flow effort.

4) Bamboo



<Figure 5>

This graph is an effort graph for bamboo. Bamboo is shown to have sustained effort, direct space effort, bound effort, and strong weight effort.

B. Step-by-step choreography

1) Step 1 – Be inspired by visual arts

Before choreographing, the choreographer understands the symbolism of Sagunja, ‘integrity in overcoming adversity,’ ‘untiring spirit,’ ‘perseverance that lasts a long time,’ and ‘power that grows modestly but not flashily.’ Alternatively, the choreographer explains the symbolism of Sagunja to the dancers, explaining the reason behind selecting the images and the choreographic intent.

2) Step 2 – Creating Movement Patterns

Creating movement patterns inspired by Sagunja. It is important to embody the feeling of drawing rather than just drawing in space. During this process, body parts can move in different ways. Dancers can utilize the space freely. While repeating the same movements is acceptable, seek out different movement patterns through variations.

3) Step 3 – Dance notation (Record choreographic data)

Utilizing the choreographic elements in <Table 2> ‘Choreographic elements inspired by Sagunja and utilizing Laban’s theory’ that applied Laban’s effort theory, or the effort graphs of Sagunja above to create diverse movement textures. On that occasion, explain the components of the Effort Factors of this study. The order of application does not necessarily have to be applied all at once. For example, time effort and space effort could be applied in the first practice, while flow effort and weight effort could be applied in the second practice. This way, the order of application can be determined according to the technical capabilities of the choreographer. What is important here is not how it looks, but to specifically record the sensations of the practitioner’s body and the various thoughts. This process is the choreography itself and serves as the foundation for creation. It will also be useful for re-performances.

C. Somatic data of the researcher

Plum blossom is where the dance starts. I can only portray circle after circle as plum blossom’s pattern. My body did not move freely as I dwelled into the thought that I got everything wrong. So, I tried to use different parts of body and tried different patterns with my knees, toes, and hips; little by little, my body warmed up, and I felt more concentrated.

It gave a change in the speed of movement of the pattern. It was nice to feel the breath as I moved slowly by changing the time effort. I just wanted to follow my breath... When it suddenly got faster, I felt myself holding my breath and exhaling, which felt liberating. However, as I focused on the speed of movement, I couldn’t remember the various body parts I was using. I was caught up in that thought and suddenly felt dazed.

The phrase 'chi-da' in orchid kept coming to mind, and I felt like I was really hitting the orchid with a beat. However, since I kept hitting it with the same pattern, it seemed like I was wasting a lot of energy. It felt like I was doing hitting exercises. As the speed increased naturally, I got tired quickly. I thought for a long time about whether this was a problem with my physical strength or my movement. At this time, I thought that the act of hitting an orchid was a way to self-cultivation.

I seemed to enjoy strong effort. I especially felt an adrenaline rush when I moved close to the floor, because it felt as though I were using strong and heavy movements. When my body is firmly planted on the floor, my mind feels calm, and I feel incredibly peaceful. Therefore, I feel like my body moves most stably when I perform strong effort. I think this is the state of my body that has changed as I got older and time passed.

Being strong and fast at the same time seemed most difficult. Being strong and fast seems to belong to wild beasts like cheetahs. As I pondered this, I found myself walking at a tiger's pace, which startled me. It seems like thoughts control the body, and the body controls the thoughts. As I work on this, I feel my body and mind gradually becoming more aligned.

Chrysanthemums give a rich feeling ... Visual art can use a variety of materials like paint, brushes, and ink. But why does the body never seem to become richer, no matter how diverse and abundantly I try to make it? I think the "body" is a material that can change, yet is difficult to change... Should I move more sinuously? Will it become abundant then? I feel the segmented movements in my body. But then I feel like I'm falling into habitual motion again, and I feel the urge to eliminate the sinuous, continuous pattern. And without realizing it, I sighed.

Suddenly, I moved quickly and then slowed down. It wasn't easy to move quickly and then slow down. It seemed as if the afterimages of sudden and rapid movements remained on my body. I felt as though my toes were constantly shaking. So, I looked down at my soles, and my hair tie fell to the floor. Suddenly, the hair tie that fell off felt like it was a part of my body. Perhaps it was because I was thinking of autumn. I was thinking of autumn, and this reminded me of fallen leaves... I can't quite comprehend the reason, but I felt the autumn feeling and felt empty. And then I could feel the natural slowing of movement ... Do lonely people move slowly? I thought that when people feel lonely, their bodies may slow down.

I found bamboo the most challenging. It felt like bamboo was growing, but I felt like I needed to restrain myself within a limited flow, my movements stretching and shrinking repeatedly. Although it was difficult to move, I felt that bamboo was the object that resembled me the most. The movements continued and then stopped. I think the bamboo stalks were perhaps the inspiration for this movement. What was fascinating about the stopping movements was that I felt like I was making a thumping sound, especially from my torso. A fleeting thought occurred to me: could this be because torso was close to the heart? As a dancer, my movements felt not just visible, but also

intimately connected to my own organs. At that moment, I tried to focus on my heartbeat, to check whether I could hear it.

When I applied temporal effort, spatial effort, flow effort, and weight effort to the bamboo's movements, I felt like it was truly moving toward an ending. It felt as if my body itself was fading out. Then, when I set the indirect space effort to the floor and focused my gaze on it, I suddenly felt nauseous, because I realized that I had never had any experience dancing while looking only at the floor. I found myself always looking far ahead and dancing to perform movements appropriate for a proscenium theater. So, dancing with my eyes solely on the floor felt like wearing glasses with the wrong prescription, and it was incredibly painful. I felt really dizzy, like my sense of sight was going numb.

The researcher recorded somatic data immediately after practice. After recording the somatic data, I watched the video I had taken during practice again, and it was amazing to see the emotions I felt from the somatic data come back to me. The process of recording somatic data while practicing the choreographic composition method allowed me to reflect deeply. The most important thought that came to mind was that choreography requires a research process. 'Did I utilize theory and practice appropriately?' It goes without saying that the interaction and complementarity between practice and theory are important. However, I realized that achieving this mutual complementarity between practice and theory is a truly challenging task. While writing my thesis, I often felt lost due to the constant state of censorship. However, these reflections led me to believe that research on choreographic composition methods is necessary not only for myself but also for choreographers struggling with similar issues.

And another reflective introspection that remains unresolved is about the dance records that this study addresses. Why did I choose somatic data? The video results obtained from implementing the choreographic composition method for this study were approximately two to four minutes per theme. After completing the training process, the result was a video of about 15 minutes in length. In fact, the records of this study were too diverse. Initially, I worked on everything from Labanotation to motif writing and even recording movement tempo, but ultimately, I chose to record somatic data. First of all, it was a tremendous amount of work to record the dance notation theory in a way that was consistent with practical research. So, I revisited previous domestic research on Labanotation and found that even they didn't record every choreographed movement using Labanotation. I considered this a blessing. However, even if it were not for that reason, I thought it was a good idea that I chose somatic data when writing the research results. Because while choreography has focused on what others see, the greatest achievement I've felt while practicing the choreographic composition method in this study is that it has given me time to understand how I, as a choreographer, feel and move. Because while choreography has focused on what others see, the greatest achievement I've felt while

practicing the choreographic composition method in this study is that it has given me time to understand how I, as a choreographer, feel and move. Furthermore, I'd like to suggest that contemporary choreographers should at least once undergo the process of generating somatic data.

V. Conclusion

This research was inspired by Sagunja and utilized Laban's theory to compose choreography methods. Among Laban's theory, time effort, space effort, flow effort, and weight effort were used to analyze the characteristics of Sagunja's plum blossom, orchid, chrysanthemum and bamboo to choreograph. Additionally, blank space was named the choreographer's boundless imagination, and in total five components were used to choreograph.

This study was carried out over a five-month period, from May 2, 2025, to October 15, 2025, and the research methods were literary review and practice-based research. To acquire validity and reliability of the dance composition method, two dance experts and a traditional visual arts expert evaluated the choreography method. After that, the choreography method was revised reflecting their advice, and data was drawn from it. As a result, with the choreograph record effort graphs of Sagunja, step-by-step choreography and somatic data were generated. Below are the implications for the field of dance studies from this research.

First, the choreography composition method of this study has the potential to be usefully used in choreography composition method and improvisation education. Researchers and experts of this study experienced the choreography composition method of this study based on practical skills and expected that the opinions of experts would be useful for choreography composition method and improvisation education. While such education is already conducted in Western painting, it can be considered that it corresponds to the originality and significance of this study that such education can be conducted in oriental painting.

Second, it is the need to materialize the convergent choreography composition method of visual art and dance. It can be considered that it is a necessary discussion to devise a specific choreography composition method that includes an analytical theory away from abstract painting and body meeting. The design of this composition method will not only broaden the choreographer's knowledge but also broaden the choreographer's spectrum.

Third, choreography composition method can operate as a communication tool bridging the East and the West. With the increase of K-culture, the appreciation for Korean art has spiked as well, so this research used Korean art as an inspiration to dance choreography. In addition, the prominent theory of Laban was used to enable communication. This can be considered as an attempt to devise a

choreography composition method that envelops the East and the West and enables communication between people from the East and the West. As such, it can be previsionsed that the choreography composition method that is applicable to both the East and the West will continue to be in higher demand in the future. This could be an opportunity to promote the meaning of Korean Sagunja to the international world.

Fourth, this research suggests the suitability of somatic data as a dance record. The choreography composition method of this study was implemented based on practical skills to generate somatic data. This study confirmed that these data make the feeling of video recording more vivid, indicating that records can vary in contemporary choreography, and that somatic data can be useful as choreography records.

Fifth, in the research on choreography, it is essential not only to conduct literature research but also practice-based research. This study conducted not only literature research but also practice-based research. This can be said to be a method that can complement practical skills and theory, and since research on choreography is often conducted in parallel, a complex research method is necessary for in-depth insight into the research.

A notable shortcoming of this study is that it was limited to Sagunja among traditional paintings. However, Sagunja best represents the characteristics of the traditional Korean as it is the most often depicted object. Moreover, Sagunja is a traditional Korean painting that represents the mind of a Korean gentleman such as incision and persistence, and Korean spirit, so this can be seen as the ingenuity of this study. In this respect, it is meaningful that this study studied choreography using the beauty of Korean tradition. The follow-up studies of this study are suggested as a study on improvisational dance that was inspired by oriental painting, a study on a choreography method that combines visual art and dance, and a study on a choreography method that is adaptable to both the East and the West. This study is anticipated to be a composition method that expands the spectrum of choreography with a new choreography composition method that will be the basic study of choreography encompassing the East and the West.

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A Study on the Choreography of Sagunja Using Laban's Theory

– Focusing on the Effort Factors –

Yi, Joo Won* · **Kim, Taeyeon****

Visiting Researcher at Institute of Sport Science, Chungnam National University*

· Creative Director, Serene K-ART (Minhwa) by artist Tenny K **

The choreography method using visual inspiration and Laban's Effort Factors was discussed in this research. Sagunja's characteristics were categorized into seasonality, form, light and shade, spatial adaptation and blank space, to understand the source of inspiration. These features were then translated into choreographic terms using Laban's Effort Factors: Time (seasonality), Space (form), Flow (light and shade), and Weight (spatial adaptation). Blank space was interpreted as a room for the choreographer's boundless imagination. Accordingly, this research choreographed works based on Laban's Effort theory and documented the movements using Effort graphs, step-by-step choreography and somatic data. To enhance validity, dance experts and a traditional visual arts expert evaluated the study. This research is original in its attempt to develop a choreography method that transcends East and West by integrating Korean traditional art. Furthermore, this study is valuable as it can assist dancers in employing a variety of movements and applying these findings within dance education.

Keywords: Dance(무용), Laban's theory(라반이론), Effort Factor(에포트 인자), Dance notation(무용 표기법), Sagunja(사군자)