

DANCE STYLE LOCATOR

Korean Dance



Korea is located on a peninsula to the east and south of China and Russia, and to the west of Japan. There are about 3,000 islands belonging to Korea, mostly off the west and south coasts. Because of its geographical location, Chinese culture filtered into Japan through Korea, and these three countries share a common cultural sphere of Buddhism and Confucianism. At the end of World War II, the Korean peninsula was divided into two distinct regions with different governing systems, known as North Korea and South Korea.

Korean traditional dance is varied and diverse, but it can be divided into three groups: *jakbeop* (Buddhist ceremonial dance), *jeongjae* (court dance), and folk dance. Dance has been performed at major national and religious events in Korea since about 900AD. Court dances developed around 1392 with the installation of royal culture, and were danced at national banquets and celebrations as well as for foreign dignitaries. Most court dances are in praise of the solemnity and importance of the royal family, and are characterized by the beautiful costumes and

strong artistic blend. **Folk dances**, on the other hand, developed along with increase in commerce and industry, in the early 1900's. It expresses the lives and emotions of the common people and often comments critically on the society of the time.

Nong-ak ("Farmer's Dance") For centuries, every spring and every fall, Korean farmers have performed this lively processional dance to assure a bountiful crop and successful harvest. Today, the Farmer Dance is performed simply to celebrate, at any time of year, expressing joy and hope for the future. The drums (sogo, changgo, and puk) and the gongs (ching and kwaengwari) make plenty of noise to scare away potential troubles.

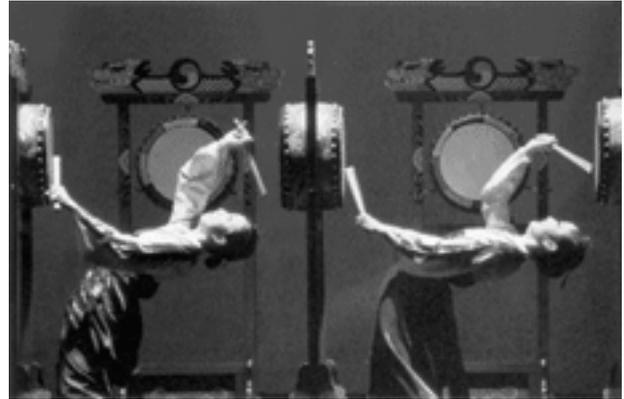
Sogochum is one of the most popular solo performances in *Nong-ak*. The sogo (small drum) used in this dance, is about 15 inches in diameter. The drum is held together with a knob with the left-hand and is beaten on the drumhead with a firm stick with the right-hand. The *nong-ak* band features the sogo as a dance prop as well as a musical instrument. The sogo players usually occupy the front line on stage, with the solo performer leading. A version of this dance is performed in *People Like Me 2005* by the Ong Dance Company.

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(Korean dance, continued)

Sam-go Mu (“Tree Stand Drum Dance” or “Three Drum Dance”)

The performers of Sam-go Mu are both drummers and dancers, combining rhythmic dexterity with acrobatic movement. The dance begins with a dramatic rolling of drumsticks around the ridges of the drum's circumference, gradually building to a crescendo. The elegant and gentle movements of the female dancers express the blessing and great joy of mother earth.



Legend has it that a high-ranking government official of the Koryo period (918-1392 AD) by the name of Yi Hon found a piece of wood on the seashore where he was exiled, and made a drum out of it that had a wonderful sound. Other evidence suggests that standing drums were introduced into Korean culture from China during the reign of King Seongjong (1457-1494 AD) and were popularized during the late Chosun Period in the 19th century.

The drums express the sound of the mother-like earth, and the temperate will and splendor of the women are demonstrated through the dance. The self-sacrificing spirit of the mother so devoted to family and home, the seemingly endless amount of farm work, and the cyclical process of life are all celebrated through the strong and graceful Sam-go Mu. This dance is also presented in *People Like Me 2005*.