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# Dancing with Nostalgia in Taiwanese Contemporary “Traditional” Dance

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Critical Dance Studies

by

Szu-Ching Chang

August 2011

Dissertation Committee:
Dr. Jacqueline Shea Murphy, Chairperson
Dr. Marta Elena Savigliano
Dr. Daphne Pi-Wei Lei

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The Dissertation of Szu-Ching Chang is approved:

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Committee Chairperson

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Dancing with Nostalgia in Taiwanese Contemporary "Traditional" Dance

by

Szu-Ching Chang

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Critical Dance Studies
University of California, Riverside, August 2011
Dr. Jacqueline Shea Murphy, Chairperson

This dissertation focuses on Taiwanese contemporary choreographies that incorporate "traditional" materials. I examine the works of two female-led dance companies in Taiwan: *Pilgrimage*, staged by Taipei Folk Dance Theater in 2004 and *Jiao*, performed by Legend Lin Dance Theater in 1995 and in 2006. My dissertation engages with interdisciplinary perspectives on the concept of nostalgia. Focusing especially on the dancing body, which is living and changing, I theorize a body-based understanding of engagements with nostalgia, and argue for the dancing body a site of nostalgic negotiation. This approach reevaluates the critical possibility of Asian dance practices and offers a critique to the binary ideology between the West and the East.

In chapter one, I demonstrate how, historically, Taiwanese female choreographers engaged nostalgically with "traditional" Chinese *Min-Zu* dance in ways that somehow empowered them in post-war Taiwan. In chapter two, I discuss the development of Taiwanese subjectivity after the 1980s and suggest that another kind of nostalgia, focusing on local culture, was generated widely during this period. My discussions of the search for Taiwanese cultural symbols and the desire to redefine Taiwanese bodies

provide historical and political background that situates the two dance companies analyzed later.

In chapter three, I examine how Li-Hua Tsai, the choreographer of *Pilgrimage*, incorporates folk elements that highlight female spirituality in this dance. I suggest this dance piece negotiates different nationalism(s) in its attempt to fulfill the audiences' and governmental desires for the staging of cultural representations of Taiwan. Tsai's self-positioning in the local culture of Taiwan also achieves visibility in the international folk dance festivals. In chapter four, I explore how Lee-Chen Lin, the creator of *Jiao*, constructs a specific body aesthetic that demonstrates a body-based nostalgia, one that choreographs both her local resistance and her niche in the global market. By exploring how contemporary women choreographers in Taiwan continue to engage with their different longings, I bring Asian female choreographers back into dance discourses and recognize their complicated strategies of choreographing nostalgia(s) that bridge not only the past and the present, but also the local and the global.

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# Introduction

## Choreographing Nostalgia

*This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing in from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such a violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress. The concept of the historical progress of mankind cannot be sundered from the concept of its progression through a homogeneous, empty time. A critique of the concept of such a progression must be the basis of any criticism of the concept of progress itself.*

*-- Walter Benjamin "On the Concept of History"*

### Taiwanese[1] Bodies in Motion

This dissertation has been generated out of my interest in contemporary Taiwanese choreographers' works that are posited, or posit themselves, as "traditional", "oriental", "spiritual", and, "alternative" on both local and global stages. In these kinds of inscriptions, no matter which terminology has been employed, I often read an ambiguous figure of the timeline of (Western) progress, in which Taiwanese choreographers are located uncertainly and uncomfortably in the binary between the "traditional" and the "modern" by themselves or by the Western gaze. The anxiety of being "left-behind" as well as the praise of "catching-up" have been concealed and interwoven in the Taiwanese artists' works, claims, and criticisms. The danger of proclaiming a singular model of progress has been acknowledged and put into debates, especially voiced from previous colonized "others" who enter (western) academia nowadays; however, contemporary

[1] In this dissertation, I use the term "Taiwanese" to refer those who identify with Taiwan culturally, disregard their origin, citizenship, political alliance, race or ethnicity. In this sense, Taiwanese include people who are either born and raised in Taiwan or who have settled in Taiwan as residents; this term may also include the former Taiwan residents in diaspora. I use different terms to specify the different groups within Taiwan, when needed for my discussion.

Asian artists' works are still easily caught in and slip into the paradoxical position of the "traditional", by which their cultural continuity (with the past) is highlighted, and their innovative contributions are often ignored.

This dissertation focuses on two female led contemporary dance companies in the 1990s Taiwan, the Taipei Folk Dance Theater (TFDT), created by Li-Hua Tsai, and Legend Lin Dance Theater (LLDT), created by Lee-Chen Lin. I analyze one major work from each dance company, *Pilgrimage* (TFDT) and *Jiao* (LLDT), to demonstrate the two choreographers' efforts to connect with certain local traditions while offering new interpretations to this (re)calling. Both works incorporate materials from local Ma-Zu rituals and religious symbols. Both dance companies reposition their subjectivity by conducting ethnographic research on local rituals and retraining their bodies to create a new artistic direction.

While most previous Taiwanese dance scholars' works mainly focus on the modern dance works of Cloud Gate Dance Theatre,[2] my interest is in the choreographers who work more directly on "traditional" dance or employ "traditional" materials. I recognize Cloud Gate artistic director Hwai-Min Lin's leading role in Taiwan, and the way his powerful influence professionalized dance careers, transformed "traditional" movements into modern dance, and localized cultural representations from Taiwanese folk culture, all

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[2] Please see Yu-ling Chao, "Dance, Culture and Nationalism: The Socio-Cultural Significance of Cloud Gate Dance Theatre in Taiwanese Society." (City University, 2000); Ya-Ping Chen, "Dance History and Cultural Politics: A Study of Contemporary Dance in Taiwan, 1930s-1997" (New York University, 2003). SanSan Kwan, "Choreographing Chineseness : global cities and the performance of ethnicity" (Ph D, New York University, 2003); Yatin Christina Lin, "Choreographing a flexible Taiwan: Cloud Gate Dance Theatre and Taiwan's changing identity, 1973--2003" (Ph.D., University of California, Riverside, 2004).

of which are all well discussed in these Taiwanese scholars' works. However, this dissertation intends also to acknowledge the contributions of other choreographers in Taiwan, focusing on female choreographers to disclose their negotiations given their subject positions in Taiwan, and on their strategies, which may differ from Hwai- Min Lin's.

My investigation of Taiwanese contemporary dance draws from academic inquiries on dance studies in relation to post-colonialism, cultural memory, gendered nationalism, and globalization. I investigate the construction of Taiwanese subjectivity by and through Taiwanese dancing bodies since the lifting of the Martial Law in Taiwan in 1986[3]. With the unbounding of political restrictions and the loosening of Cold War ideology, Taiwanese people have space to rethink what it means to be "Taiwanese," and to identify with the location of Taiwan as a subject position, instead of simply considering themselves as (Chinese, American, and Japanese) "other ". (In saying this, I recognize that the self and the other are always interweaving and that the boundary between the two has been constantly defined and redefined in the construction.[4]) A wide and dynamic searching for Taiwanese subjectivity with the reflections on the issues of modernity, colonialism, nationalism, and "the past", starts to develop most fully, I suggest, during this period. This does not mean that this kind of awareness was absent prior to this period.

[3] Marital Law was declared by the R.O.C regime in 1948, continued in Taiwan for almost forty years, and finally terminated in 1987. Under Martial law, some civil rights, such as freedom of speech, were limited and controlled by the military rule and by the sovereign of Taiwan, in the name of "the state of emergency" of wartime.

[4] Cultural identity, as cultural theorist Stuart Hall argues, is "a matter of becoming" (225).Please see Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford ( London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990).

Debates about Taiwanese subjectivity have been discussed among cultural intellectuals, but had been concealed under other forms of debates. Only in the past twenty-four years have debates on Taiwanese subjectivity, with its multiples definitions, been widely discussed and publicly expressed. The reconceptualization of Taiwanese dancing bodies is one of the various ways to articulate this searching.

Except for the Indigenous Peoples[5] who have been settled in the land that is today called Taiwan[6] for thousands of years, most Taiwanese people are the descendants of the different waves of immigrants from China, those who were exiled, displaced, and in diaspora at different historical moments and later located themselves as the residents of Taiwan. Taiwan as a small island lying between the ocean and the mainland has presented itself as a bridge, the location where people migrate to and/or migrate from with temporal or terminal stays. Also, Taiwan is the counter-boarder between Western (Spanish, Dutch, Japanese and then the United States)[7] imperial powers (which in fact mostly came from

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[5] In this dissertation, I use the term "Indigenous Peoples of Taiwan" or "Taiwanese Indigenous Peoples" to refer to the Natives of Taiwan who had been living in Taiwan for at least eight thousands years prior to the immigration of the Han people from China. In contemporary Taiwan, we use the term "Yuan-Zhu-Min", which means "original inhabitants," and this term is considered to be respectful and official. Several English translations are used interchangeably, such as "Taiwanese Aborigines," "Taiwanese Aboriginal people," "Taiwanese Indigenous Peoples," and "Indigenous Peoples of Taiwan."

[6] Prior to the naming of Taiwan, as recorded in Chinese history, this island was called as *liu qiu* (the same with Ryukyu Islands) or *dong man* (East Barbarian) by Chinese people. Such terms positioned Taiwan either as a far island or as a barbarian place. When Portuguese people passes through Taiwan, they praised it "Formosa", which mean beautiful island. As the result, "Formosa" was used to name Taiwan by European internationally, before China recovered it and named as the Providence of Taiwan in the Qing dynasty.

[7] The Spanish and the Dutch had occupied partial Taiwan in the seventeenth centuries. Japan colonized Taiwan for fifty years (1895-1945).

the north east side of Taiwan) and South-Eastern Chinese civilization, (which in fact came from the west side of Taiwan). Therefore, Taiwan has struggled to survive in the presumed binary space between Eastern culture (seen as the "traditional" associated with the past) and Western culture (seen as the "modern" associated with the future).

Moreover, the political situation and the process of industrialization and of globalization further constitute Taiwanese people's psychological sense of being unsettled. After the fifty-year Japanese colonization with the identification of Japan as motherland, Taiwanese people had been resituated by the Kuomintang (KMT), Chinese Nationalist Party, regime[8], as the (national and thus political) "Chinese" people, who must fight back to mainland China, the motherland, for another forty years. This political ideology constructed a fictive sense of being in diaspora while physically being at home[9]. Also, with the United States' financial support in the 1950s, Taiwanese people achieved dramatic economic development but also suffered from industrialization and urbanization. Many lower-class laborers, especially the Indigenous youth, had to leave their homes in the countryside to work in the city, where they could not afford to rent or to buy a house. Then, with the development of global trade, Taiwanese people, with their capital and professional skills, became part of global capitalism and laborers who temporally or

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[8] The Republic of China (R.O.C.) was established in 1912 led by Sun Yat-Sen. Its history ended in 1945 according to the records of the successive regime, the People's Republic of China (P.R.C.). However, the R.O.C. was exiled to Taiwan after the KMT regime (Kuomintang, Chinese Nationalist Party) lost the civil war. In Taiwan's history, the R.O.C. still continues today. The KMT regime discussed in this dissertation mostly refers to the KMT government during 1949-2000. With Shui-Bian Chen winning the presidency in 2000, the Democratic Progressive Party (DDP) was in government from 2000-2008. The KMT party came into power after Ying-Jeou Ma won the presidential election in 2008.

[9] Please see chapter one for further discussion.

terminally stay in different locations of the world. In other words, Taiwanese people have kept their bodies moving at fast speeds.

The constant moving contributes to my entanglement with the concept of nostalgia in this dissertation as the overall theoretical frame, because I employ this concept as a motion rather than simply an attachment. Cultural studies scholar James Clifford criticizes anthropologists' preference to treat "native" culture as fixed object of research and he argues that "the 'chronoscope' of culture (a setting or space organizing time and space in representable whole form) comes to resemble as much a site of travel encounters as of residence."[10] He suggests that because moving is a living status of human beings and of culture, its rootedness is interwoven with its routes, and the perspective of dwelling-in-travel should be acknowledged. Examining the Taiwanese dancing body in relation to the construction of Taiwanese subjectivity, I not only investigate how the cultural practices rooted in the location of Taiwan have been articulated but also how multiple routes have been taken in negotiation with different encounters by Taiwanese people. In the following chapters, I consider the specific history and geopolitics of Taiwan that maintains its identity in an unstable process of locating and relocating, and address why and how these Taiwanese choreographers interpret the sense of different times and different spaces, and re-position themselves in the movements of (re)calling.

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[10] James Clifford, *Routes : travel and translation in the late twentieth century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997). 25.

## Nostalgia[11] as a Bodily Tactic of Taiwanese Choreographers

The overall theoretical position of this dissertation is the concept of nostalgia as a bodily tactic of Taiwanese choreographers[12]. Examining Taiwanese choreographers' works, I argue that they construct their subjectivity by choreographing their dancing bodies in ways that engage with different kinds of nostalgias - pining for the folk, for the past, and for the nation - in order to negotiate with preexisting social powers. In other words, calling for a past in the present, i.e. nostalgia, is a tactic they use to negotiate with nationalism(s), globalism, and multiculturalism. Identifying the tripartite relationship between nationalism, globalization and gendered dancing bodies, I recognize this space as a dynamic battleground where Taiwanese choreographers construct their subject positions. Holding the task of constructing contemporary Taiwanese dance, these choreographers employ their dancing bodies to cooperate, negotiate with and confront social powers in this tripartite space.

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[11] I would like to thank Dr. Christina Schwenkel and Dr. Jacqueline Shea Murphy for their contribution to my academic interests in the theory of nostalgia. Svetlana Boym's book *The Future of Nostalgia* and the inter-relationship between the body and memory were first introduced to me in Dr. Christina Schwenkel's Anthropology seminar "History and Memory" in the Spring of 2007; My advisor Dr. Shea Murphy first introduced Renato Rosaldo's article "Imperialist Nostalgia" to me in our "Rhetorical Approaches to Dance Studies" seminar in the Fall of 2007. This dissertation was sparked by and developed from these materials, and my theoretical position on "nostalgia" formulated in discussions of them particularly with my advisor in preparing for my Written Qualify Exam in the Fall of 2008. I thank Dr. Schwenkel for introducing me to materials that catalyzed my thinking, and Dr. Shea Murphy for guiding me through this long-term project investigating the intersection between Taiwanese dancing bodies and their nostalgic longings.

[12] I draw this idea from Susan L Foster' theorization of the concept "Choreographing" as a tactic that choreographers employ, please see S.L. Foster, *Choreographing history* (Indiana Univ Pr, 1995); Susan Leigh Foster, "Choreographing History," in *Choreographing History*, ed. Susan L. Foster (Indiana University Press, 1995).

I argue that the subject positions of Taiwanese female choreographers are continually defined and redefined by situating their dancing bodies in its specific social context. Feminist Iris Marion Young, in her discussion of the female body and experience, argues that "gender is best understood as a particular form of the social positioning of lived bodies in relation to one another within historically and socially specific institutions and process that have material effects on the environment in which people act and reproduce relations of power and privilege among them."[13] She points out that a gendered position is how one situates one's flesh in a social context that constrains the multiple ways that one may use free will, and suggests that this social positioning of the gendered body reproduces power relationships.

However, the multiple ways of articulating one's body offer the opportunity to revise one's alternative freedom in dance practices. In dance scholar Janet O'Shea's discussions of Bharata Natyam, she suggests that different choreographers carefully select their strategies to both respond to and negotiate with other social forces. By recognizing that "tradition is a way of viewing the past,"[14] she argues that individuals choreograph their strategies to position themselves in the debates of nationalism and gender roles. Similarly, Sally Banes, in her discussions on the agency of the ballet dancing body, argues that most dancers are young women, who are in greatest status of their techniques and powers, and

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[13] Iris Marion Young, *On female body experience : "Throwing like a girl" and other essays*, Studies in feminist philosophy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).. 22

[14] Janet O'Shea, *At home in the world : bharata natyam on the global stage* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2007).14.

their professions are actively dancing.[15] She suggests that these female dancers expressed their viewpoints and opinions through dancing on stage and explaining their dances off stage. Therefore, a critical reading of the dancing body and its strategies, as well as the way dancers speak about their dances, can offer further understandings about how Taiwanese choreographers articulate their subjectivities on and off stage.

I draw the discourses of nostalgia mainly from literature and cultural studies scholar Svetlana Boym's discussion on nostalgia in visual culture, social-cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai's criticism of modernity, postmodern anthropologist Renato Rosaldo's warning of imperialism, postmodern historian Arif Dirlik's argument on local-global politics, and other scholars' discussions on nostalgia and cultural memory. I am aware of the history of this term "nostalgia," and the way it contains a negative degradation toward certain people's longing for home(s) and past(s) by proclaiming the ideal of modernization and rationalization. The academic discussions on the issue of nostalgia have been widely raised from media and cultural studies since the 1990s, especially in the criticism on the commoditization and the fetishism of cultural memory in mass consumption. Nostalgia has appeared as a negative concept that either opposes the concept of progress or that embraces traditions without reflection.

As historian Kimberly K. Smith warns us, the hidden progressive ideology of using nostalgia as a disapproval has posited the resistance of marginal people as simply 'irrational' and 'emotional' reactions and blamed their 'backwardness' in the name of

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[15] Sally Banes, *Dancing women : female bodies on stage* (London England ; New York: Routledge, 1998).6.

development[16]. While she reveals the presumption of this ideology that despises these longings as “mere nostalgia,” she argues for a new interpretation and evaluation to people’s longing for a different time and space. In other words, only by critically analyzing the expressions of nostalgia and its position in the power networks can nostalgia be understood for its political resistance. While more and more scholars acknowledge the possibility of nostalgia as an act and site of resistance and a creative space, especially in the analyses of visual expressions, this standpoint is where this dissertation starts from as well as departs from.

Also, nostalgia had been an important topic and metaphor in the classical Chinese literature tradition, especially in poetry, by which Chinese intellectuals expressed their criticisms to the sovereign power without direct confrontation[17]. These expressions of nostalgia and homesickness were often produced by cultural elites when they were demoted from their positions by the imperial courts and forced into exile in the countryside. In these writings, “home,” or hometown, was an ambivalent projection that referred not simply to the home of the writer, but to the center of political power. Although some writers still longed return to the authority, most of them offered their critiques and dissatisfaction in their narratives of pinning for home in their uprooted journeys. The theme of and tradition of writing on nostalgia has continued in contemporary Chinese literature in China and in Taiwan with different concerns and

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[16] K.K. Smith, "Mere nostalgia: notes on a progressive paratheory," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 3, no. 4 (2000).505-527.

[17] Nostalgic poetry, or the poetry expressing nostalgia, is categorized and identified in contemporary analyses of and discussions on Chinese classical literature.

expressions in response to different political situations[18]. Although my examinations of the theory of nostalgia, below, are draw from western academic discussions, the tradition of writing nostalgia to offer political critiques in the context of Chinese literature should also be acknowledged.

## I. Nostalgia and Modernity

Driven by the sense of displacement, nostalgia is a common pursuit for a sweet past in a modern condition. As Svetlana Boym argues, nostalgia is a longing "for a different time" and "to revisit time like space,"[19] what nostalgia wants to return to is not so much the place called home as the time called the past, in which everything seemed to be more stable, simple, and sweet than it is now. More precisely, it is a reaction against the fragmental, over-developed, and fast-changing modern world. Nostalgia stands in a position opposed to the linear ideal of progress and is a resistive feeling against globalization that produces a sense of displacement. Therefore, nostalgia is not only an individual anxiety but a modern condition of collective searching for past memory.

Also, nostalgia, the mourning for a lost home, is a never-satisfied desire because of the impossibility of its fulfillment, that is, home-coming. Nostalgia is a dynamic process of experiencing and expressing a desire to return to an intimate place out there, in a long distance; however, the perfect home only exists in one's mind rather than on a concrete

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[18] Please see D.D. Wang, "Imaginary Nostalgia: Shen Congwen, Song Zelai, Mo Yan, and Li Yongping," *From May Fourth to June Fourth. Ed. Ellen Widmer and David Der-wei Wang. Cambridge: Harvard UP* (1993).

[19] Svetlana Boym, *The future of nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001).xv.

place. As Boym states, "nostalgia is a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed," it is "a romance with one's own fantasy."[20] Home is not simply a physical place but a feeling of attachment that relates to one's memory of it, thus the "perfect" home in nostalgia is an imagined one. As a result, either because the past home is unreachable in one's diasporic experiences or because the unchanged home only exists in one's fantasy of the past, nostalgia is a journey of longing. It orients to an endless searching for the impossible return and/or a home-returning that can never be satisfied.

Moreover, nostalgia is a social practice that one actively constructs and creates in relation to one's subject position. In discussing "nostalgia without memory" that draws from Fredric Jameson's argument about the politics of nostalgia, Arjun Appadurai indicates that postmodern nostalgia is not simply a return to a home but a "synchronic warehouse of cultural scenarios" in the global construction of imagination.[21] He indicates that contemporary nostalgia is produced in the disjunctions of postmodern condition and is circulated as a staged scene, a cultural commodity, to formulate the imagined globality. Different from other scholars' critiques on cultural industry, he recognizes the possible productivity of cultural scenarios and argues for "the imagination as a social practice" in which "the imagination is central to all forms of agency and is itself a social fact."[22] Although Appadurai distinguishes the difference between fantasy

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[20] Ibid. xiii.

[21] *Arjun Appadurai, Modernity at large : cultural dimensions of globalization, Public worlds (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).*30-31.

[22] Ibid. 31.

and imagination, in which nostalgia is categorized as an unproductive fantasy, I recognize the possibility of nostalgia as a creative imagination. Nostalgia is not inspired from nowhere; rather, it is generated from one's memory and historical position. In other words, the nostalgia for the past worlds that one may never have lost is a social construction of cultural imagination. It may be unreal, because it never "really" happened in one's life; but it is a social fact that one creates to shape one's sense of home and the world.

In short, nostalgia is a longing for an intimate space and a continuing time in the disjunction of modern life. It is an endless searching for a past, because one's ideal home is built only in one's mind that may never really exist. Despite its impossible satisfaction, nostalgia is an act of cultural imagination, expression, and creation with which one builds up one's sense of home to position him or herself in the world. While Appadurai offers a critical value of agency to cultural imagination as a social practice, I will further examine different kinds of nostalgia in order to investigate who has the power to express nostalgia, from where, and for what. This examination is important to rethink the responsibility of cultural elites, to which Taiwanese choreographers belong.

## II. Identifying Different Kinds of Nostalgia

Engaged with a construction of a collective past by the dominant power of nationalism, Boym identifies what she calls "restorative nostalgia" that is an intention "to rebuild the lost home" and a "reconstruction of monuments of the past."[23] Restorative

nostalgia is a project of nationalism that constructs a past home as a common origin and selects particular historical "facts" as a singular continuity of the nation. The image of homeland, in this sense, is composed into one official version of memory proffered by a small group of people in power, rather than it being open to individual memories and multiple interpretations of the various homes. Boym criticizes that, in restorative nostalgia, nationalists secretly construct a collective past by excluding those "non-us" in order to maintain the alleged legitimacy and the authority of the nation-state unified by a common past.

In contrast to her criticism on restorative nostalgia, Boym argues for "reflective nostalgia" that holds a more flexible attitude that recognizes fragmental memories, multiple interpretations, and diverse viewpoints of the pasts, as a potential space to creatively resist modernity. Adopting the strategies of "defamiliarization and sense of distance," reflective nostalgia is aware of the myth of an absolute past and critically rethinks the relationship between past, present, and future as well as between individual and collective.[24] In other words, this kind of nostalgia emphasizes a critical journey to the past(s) that allows multiple interpretations to problematize the conceptualization of a fixed past and to critique the linear concept of progress. Therefore, in order to point out alternative versions of life in the present and for the future, reflective nostalgia thoughtfully reviews and re-imagines possible pasts in the dream of different times and spaces now and then.

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[23] Boym, *The future of nostalgia*. 41

[24] Ibid.50.

However, the longing for an alternative future is easily confused with the myth of the "vanishing savage", which is dangerously taken by imperialists as an excuse to escape responsibility for their past colonization. Anthropologist Renato Rosaldo discusses "imperialist nostalgia" wherein imperialists take a position of innocence and miss the "pure," "primitive," and simple life of "the others" that they changed in their civilization project, because "static savage societies become a stable reference point for defining (the felicitous progress of) civilized identity".[25] Therefore, imperialists' mourning of (others') loss is actually mourning for the unidentified self, because the disappearing of "tradition" erases the possibility of recognizing what is modern.

While Rosaldo warns that imperialist nostalgia evades the responsibility of colonizers in favor of a romantic calling for a simple past, this nostalgia is further popularized in the global consumption of the local, which is transformed by the cultural elites of "the other". In other words, the increasing global interest in ethnic products could be seen as a reaction of longing for a sweet past, in which the fantasy of the local becomes the reference. Mike Featherstone criticizes the cultural elites of mass media who collect local culture in order to "pack and market them in the metropolitan centers and elsewhere."[26] Nostalgia is transformed into commodities of fantasy that dislocate local cultures and promote these colorful images for the global market.

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[25] Renato Rosaldo, "Imperialist Nostalgia," *Culture and Truth: The Remarking of Social Analysis*, no. Beacon Press (1989).70.

[26] Mike Featherstone, "Localism, Globalism and Cultural Identity," in *Global/Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary*, ed. R. Wilson and W. Dissanayake (Durham:: Duke UP, 1996).63.

Therefore, it is important to adopt a critical attitude to pursue the pining for an alternative presence and future in opposition to the dream of modernity. As Arif Dirlik suggests, "the contemporary local is itself a site of invention;"[27] he recognizes ways the emphasis on the local is not a draw-back but a productive resource and a political position. Considering the possible political imagination that reflective nostalgia may generate, a renewing transformation of the local can offer resistance against global flows. Because "reflective nostalgia challenges the tunnel version [of future in the model of linear progress], backtracking, slowing down, looking sideways, meditating on the journey itself,"[28] it can offer a critical and slow revision that allows multiple interpretations of the past and of the future to generate local awareness and resistance. In other words, reflective nostalgia is a journey that explores different possible versions of the future by constantly reviewing pasts. It is a survival strategy that critically incorporates past home with present home for marginalized and displaced people.

Aware of the politics of nostalgia, a "place-based" reflection is a critical position from which marginalized people can negotiate with long-distance nationalism and global flows. Dirlik argues for a place-based politics to counter hegemonic constructions of identity and global culturalism, especially challenging some diaspora discourses that contribute to a dangerous long-distance nationalism. He argues that the concept of "nationality may be sustained by privileging those in diaspora against the inhabitants of

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[27] Arif Dirlik, "Place-Based Imagination: Globalism and the Politics of Place," in *Places and Politics in an Age of Globalization*, ed. R. Prazniak and A. Dirlik (Lanhan: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001). 42.

[28] Boym, *The future of nostalgia*. 348.

both the nation of origin and the nation of arrival, or by de-historicizing and de-socializing reification of the so-called national culture."[29] In other words, the sense of connection to a place where a person currently resides is important to offer a more reflective attitude to one's longing for a "home". From this perspective that emphasizes one's physical sense of location and encounter, I will position the body back into the discussion of nostalgia, which is often ignored due to scholars' preference for visual culture.

## III. Dancing Body and Nostalgia

The nostalgia I discuss here is not merely an individual one, but is one kind of cultural memory that is shared collectively and transmitted in dance practices from a certain cultural perspective. In other words, it is socially constructed, publicly expressed and individually revised in its circulations. While many discussions of nostalgia mainly focus on visual images and cultural heritage, they often ignore the fact that bodily practices engage in the construction, expressions, and circulation of nostalgia. Sociologist Paul Connerton, in his book *How Societies Remember*, suggests that social memory should be analyzed from "those acts of transfer that make remembering in common possible", because "the recollected knowledge of the past are conveyed and sustained by (more or less ritual) performances."[30] In other words, social memory does not simply

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[29] Arif Dirlik, "Intimate Others: [Private] Nations and Diasporas in an Age of Globalization," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* vol. 5 no. 3(2004). 497.

[30] Paul Connerton, *How societies remember*, Themes in the social sciences (Cambridge England ;

work *on* or *through* the body but also is produced *by* and *with* the body. Therefore, nostalgia, which is both socially constructed and culturally selected, is enacted and transferred by bodily practices.

Extending the concept of "the act of transfer", dance scholar Diana Taylor uses the concept of archive/repertoire to discuss how performance, as embodied knowledge, transmits, visualizes, and creates cultural memory in the Americas.[31] She challenges the logo-centralism that simply considers body as references, symbols, and texts to outside world. When bodily practices transfer certain kinds of remembrance into cultural memory, the live-ness of the body also keeps its reference changing and, therefore, discursive in its own way. Nostalgia is expressed through bodily practices to keep certain longings alive in collective memories, but it is also transferred into other kinds of cultural memories while its references of the past and its meanings keep changing with different bodies. In other words, transmitted by the living bodies, nostalgia is discursive in different contexts with different meanings.

Furthermore, dance scholar Susan L. Foster raises the concept of "muscle memory" to discuss Senegalese choreographer, Germaine Acogny, and African-American choreographer, Diane Mcintyre.[32] She argues that people are aware of and feel their experiences of grounding and then produce their individual histories with the

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New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989). 39-40.

[31] Diana Taylor, *The archive and the repertoire : performing cultural memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

[32] Susan Leigh Foster, "Muscle/Memories: How Germaine Acogny and Diane Mcintyre Put Their Feet Down," in *Rhythms of the Afro-Atlantic World : Rituals and Remembrances*, ed. Ifeoma C. K. Nwankwo and Mamadou Diouf (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010).

environment surrounding them. She argues that "the memory's past-ness is defined by the present-ness of the corporeality of the rememberer, and both are in motion."[33] The action of grounding does not simply construct another tradition, but it itself is a moving forward. Therefore, cultural memory is embodied to be memorized, while it is also the action of embodiment that transforms and transmits the "old" into the new experiences.

Situating dancing bodies into discourse on nostalgia, I argue that dance performance could be both an expression of nostalgia and a transformation of it. The living body does not simply provide the soil of certain nostalgia, but it also changes the meanings of nostalgia in social remembrance. In other words, nostalgia is not only embodied in the cultural scenarios of (multiple) home(s), but it is also weaved by the multiple ways in which bodies express longing. From this sense, bodily memory is both materially preexisting and socially constructed, both of which keep its motions with changes. The living-ness of the body allows the experience of the old to be transferred into the new, in which multiple interpretations exist synchronically and in the same space.

**Body as the Subject and the Object of Nostalgic Longings**

I propose a critical rethinking of contemporary Taiwanese dance, drawing from the previous discussions of nostalgia in which the longing for an imagined past is not simply a sign of emotional attachment, but rather a politic of emotion that is "prospective," in Boym's term. The question I ask is: How did Taiwanese choreographers long for different past(s) or different folk(s) and for what concerns and hopes? To ask this question, I

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[33] Ibid. 130.

assume the contemporaneity of "traditional" dance to confirm its political possibility in its artistic expressions on nostalgic longings. Although several recent researchers of ethnic or folk dance, such as dance scholar Anthony Shay, adopted Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm's concept of "invented tradition"[34] to critique nationalists' construction of folk dance as a cultural representation of authority, I propose a reconsideration of the emotional and physical imaginations of the pasts in these dance practices. Considering certain "traditional" dances as merely an "invented tradition" of nationalism neither discloses the potential value and dynamic embodied experiences of these dance practices, nor explains why these dances do not disappear but rather are reinvented over and over, sometimes across national lines, in the globalization era. I propose a reconsideration that contemporary "traditional" dance is an embodied experience of nostalgic longing about the past that offers prospective motion toward the future in the present.

I employ the discourse of nostalgia to connect the often separated concepts: the past and the present, written history and unwritten memory, and cultural memory and bodily experience. In other words, I am interested in the concept of nostalgia as a dynamic *action* that moves forward and backward to connect different nodes in different times and spaces in order to identify one's changing subject position. Defining nostalgia as a yearning for a past that one may never live, I suggest that its essence of imagination signifies the impossibility and unwillingness of real return. It is a gesture of calling in the

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[34] Please see Anthony Shay, *Choreographic Politics: State Folk Dance Companies, Representation, and Power.* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2002).15. Please also see Eric Hobsbawm, "The Invention of Tradition," in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

present tense. People are enchanted by the fantasy of the past, while the past that they are longing for may be different depending on their selective memories toward the past(s). It compresses the memory of five-thousands-years-ago with five-months-ago and five-minutes-ago; it accumulates different times and spaces on and within one's body. Nostalgia, a recollection of the past, offers the opportunity to express, reinterpret, and re-identify from who they were to who they are.

Examining contemporary Taiwanese dance as an expression of nostalgia, I argue that its practice is a space capable of producing political imagination, because it is a contemporary interpretation of the past based on the needs of the present for an alternative future. It performs a labor of longing, which signifies a (un-traversable) distance between the subject in modern life and the desired object in the different time. In other words, it is located in the position of the present in contrast to its gesture of calling for a past. Although "traditional" dance could be a collective and nationalist' yearning for a common past to construct nationhood, as Boym's arguments illustrate, dance practices may also disturb and exceed the single version of nostalgic searching of nationalism. It is because, different from archival representation that objectifies nostalgia, the dancing body is simultaneously the producer, the labor, and the consumer of nostalgia moving in and out of its own construction of the past. Embodying nostalgia in dance practices has its potential to resist and facilitate survival in a disorienting modern life, if approaching critically.

More importantly, the body is not only the subject that calls for a home in different time. Instead, it may be *a different body* that nostalgia is calling for and in which one can

temporally escape from the political governance of body, the body politics. This *different body* may allow female choreographers to articulate their sexual expressions, to extend their freedom of dancing, to secure their social status, or to accumulate their cultural capital. In other words, this longing for a different body moves the trainings, the embodiments, and the performances toward fantastic past(s) that offer alternative imaginations in the present. Moreover, drawing from previous discussions of a reflective nostalgia that is place-based and emphasizes roots with routes, I argue that reflective nostalgia can be *body-based*, in which the body itself is revised, as one's home, and is what dancers long for. In other words, while a place is one's physical surroundings, a frequent revision of one's body is privileged in the revisits of one's location, especially in dance practices. Recognizing the body as one's residence, one's preeminent home, which moves with one's migrations, recent Taiwanese choreographers situate the body as the subject and the object that their nostalgia yearns for. In sum, their critical returning to and re-conceptualizing the dancing body offers a space for possible reflection in their dancing with nostalgia(s).

**The Routes of My (Re)searching**

In order to historicize "traditional dance" in Taiwan, I track both the historical and individual interpretations about the past and engage with my bodily experience in certain trainings in the present. I track the historical traces from historical archives, such as journal articles, old photos, and choreographers' biographies, in order to imagine and therefore to map their embodiment experiences at that time. Due to the lack of videos in

the 1950s, I have searched for images from TV news, which report dance competition every year. To imagine these dances in the past, I use these archives and oral histories as historical traces to provide a basis for my interpretations.

While conducting archival research, I joined Baishatun pilgrimage of Ma-Zu ritual in the March of 2010. Both Tsai Li-Hua and Lin Lee-Chen, the two the choreographers I will discuss, used this pilgrimage as part of dancers' bodily trainings in choreographing Ma-Zu related works. This pilgrimage is held every year in late March or in early April, in which its followers walk from seven to ten days in the middle Taiwan with Ma-Zu's improvising instructions to visit another Ma-Zu temple. By engaging with my body in Baishatun pilgrimage, I intended to grasp the bodily experiences of choreographers and dancers. I also participated in dance classes held by Legend Lin Dance Theater as a way of better understanding the training and choreographic approaches they have used.

Considering bodily experiences as an intelligent knowledge, I employ my body as a cultural space to situate these discourses to imagine their bodily strategies. I have grown up in-between the "traditional" and the modern dance communities in Taiwan, which gives me a critical position and some opportunities to incorporate different aspects into discussions. I have been aware of how Taiwanese choreographers, especially those who work on "traditional" dance, have struggled to locate their subject position in response to different stages. My research and this dissertation intend to contextualize and examine their different approaches to dancing with different nostalgia(s).

In Chapter One, I focus on the debates of Chinese nationalism, ethnicity and female bodies in the 1950s construction of "traditional" dance in Taiwan. First, I offer the

historical and political background of the construction of Chinese *Min-Zu* dance[35] in the 1950s and 1960s Taiwan. Tracking the KMT's cultural policy that encouraged Taiwanese people to stage the illusive version of Chinese cultural traditions in China, in which the sense of nostalgia is articulated and circulated, I intend to situate why and how Taiwanese people feel unsettled in their physical location of Taiwan. Then, I examine the construction of "classical dance" and of "folk dance" in the 1950s that expresses Chinese nationalists' restorative nostalgia by calling for imaginary noble women from the past and the ethnic others in China onto stage. Analyzing two classical dance works, I intend to argue that Taiwanese dancing bodies strategically conceal their bodily memory and possible female spectatorship in their calling for a classical (and illusive) past in order to negotiate for the opportunity of middle-class women to dance. Also, examining three folk dance pieces, I investigate how the middle-class choreographers embody exotic others to secure their sexual expression in high arts. Their imaginations also reveal how Chinese Nationalism defines and redefines the boundary of Chinese nationhood by performing the included however separated ethnic-minority other.

In Chapter Two, I focus on the revival of Ma-Zu, the Ocean Goddess, religious practices in Taiwan as a cultural symbol to construct Taiwanese subjectivity and on how Ma-Zu pilgrimage is employed by performing artists to revise the concept of a Taiwanese body. I first track the raising of Taiwanese local consciousness and identity after the lifting of martial law in the late 1980s. By discussing the relation of Ma-Zu ritual with

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[35] I use the term"Chinese *Min-Zu* dance" to refer to a specific category of "traditional" dance that was promoted by Chinese Nationalists in Taiwan. For detail explanation, please see Chapter One.

multiple interpretations associated with Taiwanese Nationalism, Chinese Nationalism, and overseas Chinese cultures, I investigate how Ma-Zu is held as a fluid cultural symbol of Taiwan. Finally, I discuss the bodily experiences in Baishatun Ma-Zu pilgrimage. I demonstrate how this pilgrimage becomes a revision of home and a bodily training for cultural elites that may offer a space for reflective nostalgia.

In Chapter Three, I examine the recent construction of Taiwanese dance from local Ma-Zu ritual practices in Li-Hua Tsai's *Pilgrimage* (2004), and argue that she choreographs in a sense of nostalgia that incorporates the revisiting and re-experiencing of Taiwan local culture. I suggest ways her choreography negotiates with both the needs of Chinese Nationalism and of Taiwanese Nationalism. I also suggest that her association with local Taiwanese culture fulfills and achieves both the cultural representations of local Taiwan and visibility in international folk dance festivals.

In Chapter Four, I focus on the issue of a reflective longing in the connection of oriental-feminine-ritual in Lee-Chen Lin's ritual dance theater work, *Jiao*, which draws its inspiration from local religious practices and incorporates these into an innovative dance theater work. I discuss how the ritualized female body is situated, in the work, in the local-global configuration between Asia and the West. I start by outlining and discussing how the Oriental Avant-garde becomes a subject position that Taiwanese choreographers themselves address and are posited. Then, analyzing Lin's *Jiao*, I explore how her specific body aesthetic demonstrates a body-based nostalgia that offers a chance to rethink one's physical locations. Finally, positioning Jiao in the local–global configuration, I argue that she strategically employs the spiritual, feminine, and oriental

body to choreograph both her local resistance and her niche in the global market.

By tracking how Taiwanese choreographers engage with different longings in several historical moments of Taiwan and how they interweave with nationalism(s), gendered positions, and the local-global dynamics, I suggest new ways of thinking about nostalgia with the dancing body in mind for current academic discussions. My discussion reevaluates the critical possibility of Asian dance practices and offers a critique to the binary ideology between the West and the East. I intend to bring Asian female choreographers back into dance discourses and to complicate their strategies of choreographing nostalgia(s) that bridge not only the past and the present, but also the local and the global.

# Chapter One

# Chinese Nationalism, Anti-Communism, and Restorative Nostalgia: Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance in 1950s-1960s Taiwan

## Introduction: The Trouble in Performing "Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance"[1]

In 2006, I left Taiwan for the first time to settle in the United Sates, as an alien resident, and begin my study in the Critical Dance Ph.D. program at the University of California, Riverside. From time to time I often face a simple but difficult question that those from Taiwan often encounter and have trouble answering: "Are you Chinese?" The answer is a complicated one because it varies depending on the various contexts associated with what it means to be Chinese.[2] If I thoroughly consider what this question means, I can find myself stuck thinking about it for half an hour without even beginning to give a response.

[1] I use the term "Chinese *Min-Zu* dance" to refer to a specific category of "traditional" dance that was promoted by the R.O.C. regime in Taiwan after 1949. I keep "*Min-Zu*" as a counter-translation in this dissertation, because its meaning ambiguously swings between the concept of ethnicity, the concept of nationality, and the concept of race according to different contexts. I will discuss this dance category later in the second section of this chapter, after I discuss the concept of Chineseness. Several Taiwanese dance scholar use "*minzu wudao*" as its translation in order to reveal its complexity for their discussions. Please see Ya-Ping Chen, "Dance history and cultural politics : a study of contemporary dance in Taiwan, 1930s-1997" (2003). Yatin Christina Lin, "Choreographing a flexible Taiwan: Cloud Gate Dance Theatre and Taiwan's changing identity, 1973--2003" (Ph.D., University of California, Riverside, 2004); Kuang-Yu Cheng, "Exporting Taiwanese dances: The touring of Taiwanese ideologies through the Chinese Youth Goodwill Mission" (Ph.D., University of California, Riverside, 2005).

[2] Being translated to English, the term "Chinese" is problematically employed to refer to various meanings in different categories: ethnicity, nationality and citizenship, culture and civilization, spoken language, and writing system. In the language context of Chinese, the term "*Hua Ren*" is often used by overseas Chinese to refer to their ethnicity and race, and can be distinguished from the term "*Chung-Kuo Ren*" as the national Chinese and the citizen of China. For further discussion, please see my following discussion on "Chinese" in the first section.

In order to save time, and because I have been asked so often, I generally have quick answers such as: "I am from Taiwan and I speak (Mandarin) Chinese"[3] ready to use. If I can identify that the person asking is from China, I may answer that I am Chinese just to avoid any confrontation, knowing that what I exactly meant was "ethnic" Chinese. However when I introduce myself to elementary school students in the Gluck Fellows Program of the Arts in California, I prefer to say that I am from Taiwan and specialize in Chinese dance. In this context I can feel the fear to honestly disclose the fact that I have never had my dance training in China. It is because I feel like I would lose my authority to perform Chinese dance and present Chinese culture in front of American children, especially when they keep asking me everything they feel interested about China that I may not know. So, what is wrong with the different ways to configure the various meanings of this term "Chinese," and most importantly, my identity with Taiwan while performing Chinese dance, about which I always feel hesitated and in doubt?

In this chapter, I first focus on the concepts and content of "Chinese" and "Chineseness," which have been developed in association with Chinese nationalism[4] since the late Qing dynasty,[5] and its changing meanings in the context of Taiwan. By

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[3] Although one reads and writes in the ideographic writing system of "Chinese," one may speak another form of language (dialect in this context) which is different from Mandarin (as official language).

[4] I use the term "Chinese nationalism" to indicate the political claim that there is one coherent and common Chinese culture and therefore a united political authority of China as a nation-state. In this claim, ethnic Chinese people, even though she or he may reside outside China for generations, and other minority ethnic groups in China are all part of one "imaginary community", in terms of Benedict Anderson's criticism on nationalism.

[5] Qing Dynasty, also known as Manchu dynasty, 1644-1912, is the last dynasty of imperial China. I am aware of the concept of "Chinese" is not originated but was further articulated in late Qing dynasty, when the concept of nation-state was introduced along with the confrontation with western imperialism. But, in

tracking the ambiguous concept of "Chinese" in English as referring to ethnicity, to nationality, to the nation-state, and to culture and civilization at large, I intend to situate the construction of the "Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance" into these nationalists' and culturalists' discourses in Taiwan. I will further examine the development of this category of dances into the historical and political contexts of Taiwan after World War II. Domestically, the emergence of this dance category can be seen as a response to a sense of "restorative nostalgia," in Svetlana Boym's term,[6] along with Chinese nationalists' concern about preserving Chinese tradition and culture in Taiwan. Internationally, the development of this national and cultural performance demonstrates how the combination of anti-Communism and Chinese nationalism stabilizes the Republic of China (R.O.C.) regime[7] in Taiwan through changing global geopolitics and cultural politics. Finally, in order to examine how Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance has been localized and how the dancing body is uncontained by restorative nostalgia, I will investigate the various aspects within this categorization of dances. By analyzing the gendered bodies of several repertoires in the sub-categories of "Classical Dance" and "Folk Dance," I will discuss the agency of female dancers in the triple-relationship of nationalism, nostalgia, and dancing body in the Cold War context.

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this chapter, I will not trace the usage of the term in ancient and imperial China, but only focus on this period and the building of China as a nation-state and Chinese nationalism that supports the rising of contemporary "Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance."

[6] Svetlana Boym, *The future of nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001).

[7] The Republic of China (R.O.C.) was established in 1912 led by Sun Yat-Sen. Its history ended in 1945 according to the records of the successive regime, the People's Republic of China (P.R.C.). However, the R.O.C. was exiled to Taiwan after the KMT regime (Kuomintang, 'the national party') lost the civil war. In Taiwan's history, the R.O.C. still continues today.

**Section One: Being Chinese and its Problematic Definitions in Taiwan**

**I. Chinese Nationalism and the Nation-Building of the Republic of China**

The construction of an identical Chineseness as the essence of a nation was first generated in the nation-building process of China as a modern nation-state, which began with the creation of the Republic of China (R.O.C) in 1912. Prior to this, the closest concept to "China" (as a nation-state) was *zhongguo*, which means "Central State." This was a reference to the ideological belief of its own centrality in the world rather than as a country and its people with a precise geographical boundary, as theater scholar Daphne Lei argues.[8] It is not until the late Qing dynasty, which suffered from the occupations of various western imperial powers, that the concept of China as a nation was imagined and created. The binding between nationality and state allowed the sovereign to build a modern nation-state without the kinship of emperors, following the western model.

Although the building of R.O.C followed western political techniques of governance, Chinese nationalism proclaimed a national culture or national spirit both to resist complete westernization and to represent a national-self internationally. Postcolonial scholar Partha Chatterjee argues, in the case of Hindu nationalism, that the anticolonial nationalism in Asia and Africa is not so much an identical-self as a "difference with the 'modular' of forms of the national society propagated by the modern West" (emphasized by Chatterjee).[9] Similarly, the emphasis of "Chineseness" in Chinese nationalism

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[8] Daphne Pi-Wei Lei, *Operatic China: Staging Chinese Identity Across the Pacific* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). P6.

[9] Partha Chatterjee, *The nation and its fragments : Colonial and postcolonial histories*, Princeton studies in culture/power/history (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993). P5.

confronts the western model of modern nation-state with a difference. In announcing a continuing "longer" and "greater" Chinese civilization and traditional values from the past to the present, Chinese nationalism intended to establish a unique characteristic of being Chinese.

This is an anti-colonial struggle that draws a boundary between the Chinese-self and the Western-other, while the questions of how to present a "pure" Chinese-self and what it exactly meant seemed to always be under construction. As Chatterjee discusses, with regards to the nation-building of India, Indian nationalists separate between the material, as the outside domain that could incorporate western technologies, and the spiritual, as the inner domain that would maintain traditional values, in order to resist colonial power.[10] Similarly, the debates and efforts to define the inner and the outside domain in order to maintain Chinese values separated from the westernization process were widely raised and discussed by Chinese intellectuals in late Qing dynasty. Chinese nationalists proposed the integration of Chinese culture and spirituality into the new, modern nation-state that generated national pride in order to counter the imperial powers.

The ideal of a homogenous Chinese culture and Chinese people as one community has been raised in the 1911 Revolution. The term *zhonhua minzu,*(Chinese as a racial or ethnic category) is a recent modern concept which was created in the late Qing dynasty and, in which *Min* means "people" and *Zu* means "family" and "community"— the types of social groups formulated by (narrow or broader meanings of) kinship. The concept of *zhonhua minzu*, first only refers to Han Chinese people as the majority, is expanded by

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[10]Ibid. P6

the scholar and nationalist Qichao Liang[11] to include “Five Ethnic Groups,” the Han, the Manchu, the Mongolian, the Muslim, and the Tibetan, as one union for the building of the Republic of China. Anthropologist David Wu, in discussing how the concept of “Chinese” has been developed, explains that the term *zhonhua minzu* was associated closely with another term *zhongguo ren* (people of China) in the early stage of national building and at that time both terms were originally referring to cultural and historical conceptualization rather than one nationality or political community.[12] It is through the process of nationalizing that a unique and homogenized nationhood is constructed, in which the term *minzu* (racial or ethnic Chinese) is often employed interchangeable to refer to the nationality.

Although the emphasis on “Chineseness” is an anticolonial attempt, it provides the chance to essentialize and homogenize the “Chinese-self” with Han chauvinism in the confrontation with the “Western-others.” Its boundary and definition are vague and shifting depending on who is speaking in opposition to whom, which is influenced by both outside tensions and inner conflicts. Accordingly, the concept of Chinese culture is often a Han-centralism. In the narrative of Chinese nationalism, “one nation” actually means, “the Han people and their culture.” Here, I borrow the definition of Chinese nationalism from the founder of the R.O.C., Yat-Sen Sun. Although he claimed that China

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[11] For more discussion on how Liang’s concept of nationalism was developed from (Han) cultural nationalism to political nationalism, please see Sung-Chiao Shen and Sechin Y. S. Chien, "Turning Slaves into Citizens: Discourses on Guomin and the Construction of Chinese National Identity in the Late Qing Period," in *The Dignity of Nations: Equality, Competition, and Honour in East Asian Nationalism*, ed. S.SECHIN Shen, Y.S.C. (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2006).49-69.

[12] David Yen-Ho . Wu, "The Construction of Chinese and Non-Chinese Identities," *Daedalus* 120, no. 2 (1991). P161-162.

nationalism is an alliance of the five ethnic groups, his original goal of creating the R.O.C was to recover the Han as the center power by expelling the Manchu-barbarians.[13] Claiming the seemly harmony and equal relationships among different ethnic groups, the concept of what it is to be Chinese still has a hierarchy in which Han ethnicity is the central civilization and predominant culture. Although the conception of Chineseness seemly has been developed to include all ethnic groups who live or origin within the territory of Mainland China, what the concept itself often did is to homogenize the local cultures with the domination of Han majority.

Explaining the reasoning of using the term "Sinophone" instead of "Chinese," especially referring to the cultural practices outside China, Chinese studies scholar Shu-Mei Shih critiques the term "ethnic" Chinese and argues that "Chineseness is not an ethnicity but many ethnicities… the Han-centric construction of Chineseness is not unlike the gross misrecognition of Americans as white Anglo Saxons."[14] In other words, the construction of Chineseness and the representation of Chinese culture not only involve a process of homogenizing and totalizing all kinds of differences into a political category, but also slip this political concept into one ethnic, linguistic, and cultural concept.

Because Han-centralism posits its center and its origin in northern China, Han ethnicity itself is not homogeneous and has an inner hierarchy. As Lei argues, Han

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[13] Yat-Sen Sun proposed the revolution by the slogan "Expelling the Barbarians, recover *Zhong Hua*," in which the *Zong Hua* here only means Han people.

[14] Shumei Shi, *Visuality and identity : Sinophone articulations across the Pacific*, Asia Pacific modern (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).P24.

centralism is a “northern perspective” that is based in the Yellow River region;[15] not only ethnic minorities but also Han people in different regions may be seen as marginal and less-civilized. This “northern perspective” could be seen in the standard of official Chinese culture, for instance, the R.O.C. government used Mandarin, the Beijing dialect, as the official spoken language of China. The inner hierarchy is most demonstrated in the official version of Chinese history, in which the term “barbarian” refers not only to different ethnic groups but also to Han ethnic people living in southern part of China.

Therefore, the concept of Chineseness is collective constructed in the building of China as modern nation-state in order to conquer western imperialisms. The revolution of China was, at first, proposed by Han intellectuals to take over the political authority from the “barbarian” of Manchu, the ethnic minority compared to Han. Chinese nationalism was then extended to include other ethnic groups to maintain the oneness of “Great China.” Chinese nationalism, in fact, exclusively posits Han people in the center. From Han’s perspective, the “recovery” of Beijing as the capital of modern China re-stabilized the privileged position of the northern Han culture within the Han community. The inner conflict and negotiation between the northern Han culture and the southern Han culture and between the Han people as a homogenous concept and other ethnic minorities complicated the constructed oneness of being Chinese today. The multiple meanings of being Chinese is even problematic for overseas Chinese (or the Chinese diaspora in different locations) in negotiating with what the umbrella like concept of “Chinese”

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[15] Daphne Pi-Wei Lei, *Operatic China : staging Chinese identity across the Pacific* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). p7.

intends to cover.

**2. Restorative Nostalgia of Chinese Diaspora in Taiwan**

As an exiled government from mainland China to Taiwan since 1949, the Kuomintang (KMT) regime "continued" the Republic of China (R. O.C), while its original plan was to temporally stay in Taiwan and prepared fighting back to its homeland, the mainland China. In order to maintain and stabilize its legitimacy as the R.O.C. on Taiwan, both domestically and internationally, the KMT regime constructed Taiwan as "China" and Taiwanese people as "people of China" with all kinds of sinicizing enactments, following the definition of Chinese nationalism of the R.O.C. Tracking the historical and political situation that the KMT regime faced, its important task is to secure itself as the representative of China, although resettling in the small island of Taiwan, to compete with the People of the Republic of China (P.R.C.) in mainland China. This would obtain all resources from Taiwan and western powers to support its original plan of "recovering" China.

On the one hand, in the domestic domain, the KMT regime had to deal with conflict between the newly "displaced" Chinese immigrants (the Mainlanders) who were longing to return to China, and the localized Taiwanese residents, most of them are previous Han Chinese immigrants (the Hoklo and the Hakka) in Taiwan who had just shifted their "motherland" from the colonial Japan to the "lost" China.[16] For those who just moved to

[16] In current writing, Taiwanese people are often categorized into four groups by used these terms: the Hoklo, the Hakka, the Mainlanders, and Indigenous Peoples of Taiwan. I have to notify my reader that this categorization is problematic because they are a political category rather than an ethnic one. For further

Taiwan after 1949 during the disturbance of anti-Japanese war and the following Civil War in mainland China, most of the soldiers followed the KMT military were separated from their families and displaced in Taiwan, a small island they had never heard of or visited. The KMT regime holds anti-communist ideology to convince people that their homeland was stolen by their "enemies", the communists, even though these "enemies" may also be their family members, to ensure their loyalty to the R.O.C. At the same time, the KMT established Chinese cultural scenarios in Taiwan in order to console their nostalgia for the homeland to which they were waiting to return.

This hierarchy of Chinese nationalism steadied the privileged position of some Chinese nationalists and cultural elites in Taiwan. Aware of the class issue of global diaspora, historian Arif Dirlik argues that "the concept of nationality may be sustained by privileging those in diaspora against the inhabitants of both the nation of origin and the nation of arrival, or by de-historicizing and de-socializing reification of the so-called national culture".[17] He points out the power of diasporic elites, a privileged global class, who dislocate and symbolize the culture of the departure in order to maintain a separated cultural identity. By doing this, they are able to distinguish themselves from others in the location of the arrival. Although the situation of the postwar Taiwan may be slightly different because the KMT regime did not admit its diasporic status, the establishment of Chinese cultural superiority in Taiwan secured the leadership of some Chinese nationalists and their supporting regime.

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discussion on the construction of Taiwanese subjectivity, please see my chapter two.

[17] A. Dirlik, "Intimate others:[private] nations and diasporas in an age of globalization," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 5, no. 3 (2004). p497

Also, the nationalizing of Japanized Taiwan was employed by the KMT government to use nationalism-as-decolonization. Accordingly, the construction of Chineseness in Taiwan was also an attempt to (re)sinicize localized Taiwanese people, who had been blamed for their abandoning of their "cultural origin" during Japanese colony. It related to a hurt feeling of World War II with decolonial intention, especially from the Chinese nationalists' viewpoints. When the KMT regime moved to Taiwan, they were facing a place which had been colonized by Japan for fifty years, meaning the Taiwanese people had been accustomed to the Japan-western lifestyle, even though, prior to Japanese colonization, there were some higher-class and rich Chinese families in Taiwan who may have higher education and good knowledge in Chinese literature and culture. Regardless of the local cultures and the undeniable colonized history in Taiwan, the KMT government employed a series of enactments to sinicize, or re-sinicize, the Taiwanese from some of the Han intellectuals' viewpoints. As a result, the KMT regime rebuilt all symbolic representations of Han-Chinese, which emphasized the superiority of "northern" Han culture while degrading the local "southern" Han culture and indigenous people's culture.

The Japanese-educated Taiwanese intellectuals suffered from a sense of cultural aphasia under the KMT regime. Having experienced massive political persecution of the KMT regime since 1947, both the local intellectuals as well as the hybrid local culture of Taiwan were silenced and erased. The strict bans on using Japanese and other Taiwanese dialects further blocked the voices of the previous Japanese educated Taiwanese elites and general population. With the privileged position of Mandarin as official language,

there were very few chances for Taiwanese intellectuals to publish articles and artistic creations in 1950s Taiwan. They had to relearn the Chinese language and "traditional" culture as well as hide their Japanese-Taiwanese cultural professions, which were regarded as lower tastes by Chinese nationalists.

The KMT regime took over the way of Japanese colonial governance on Taiwanese indigenous and reconfirmed their social status as the barbarians who needed to be educated and sinicized, which was equal to civilization from Han's perspective. "Indigenous peoples" refers to the indigenous groups of "*Yuan-Zhu-Min,*" which means "original inhabitants" in Taiwan. Prior to the 1980s, the R.O.C regime referred to them as "*Sandi Ren*," meaning "High Mountain Tribes," while the Han usually called them "Fan," i.e. "barbarians," a term has been used since the Qing dynasty. According to historical evidence, they had been living in Taiwan for at least eight thousands years prior to the immigration of the Han people from China. They belong, with linguistic and genetic ties, to the Austronesian peoples and may actually originate from Taiwan. It was not until the Taiwanese indigenous movements in 1988 that the term "Taiwanese indigenous people" was used respectively and officially in Taiwan. The KMT regime, following the policy of Japan, regulated the life style of Taiwanese indigenous people for the benefits of the nation-state. The KMT executed several reformations on the Taiwanese indigenous people in the 1950s, such as the *Sandi* Life Reform Movement, the *Sandi* Trees-Planting Movement, and the *Sandi* Residential Agriculture Movement. These regulations and the speedy urbanization in Taiwan further sinicized and westernized the Indigenous Peoples' cultures.

On the other hand, in the international domain, the restored Chinese traditional culture is a cultural capital of the R.O.C. that is visible and welcome in the global cultural exchanges to demonstrate the colorful world. In his article "National Culture and its Discontents: The Politics of Heritage and Language in Taiwan, 1949-2003," Sociologist Horng-Luen Wang points out how "cultural assets" are employed as cultural capital for the nation. He raises the example of the problematic ownership of the historic relics in National Museum in Taiwan to explain how the concept that every nation must have a culture also cooperated with the marketing and consumptions of cultural exchange.[18] As a result, the demonstration of Chinese "traditional" culture positions Taiwan within the map of cultural China along with international diplomatic benefits, which the KMT needed. Meanwhile, the cultural capital that exclusively relied on "traditional" Chinese culture also maintained the location of Taiwan as a marginal space in the mapping of cultural China because it was recognized as the authentic center in the mainland China.

Ironically influenced by the nostalgia of Chinese exiles, the construction of Chineseness in Taiwan was problematically frozen at the moment that they left mainland China in the time and space of pre-1945 mainland China. They rebuilt the symbolic scenario of their homeland, China, in order to review and renew their dream of returning.[19] This kind of nostalgic calling displaced every symbolic representation, as many as one can imagine, from China to the small island of Taiwan. While the

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[18] H. L. Wang, "National culture and its discontents: The politics of heritage and language in Taiwan, 1949-2003," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 46, no. 4 (2004). P793-795

[19] For how the landscape of Taipei becomes a battleground for national demonstration, please see H. Leitner and P. Kang, "Contested urban landscapes of nationalism: the case of Taipei," *Cultural Geographies* 6, no. 2 (1999).

architecture of the National Palace Museum reveals itself as a shadow of the Palace Museum in Peking, the names of streets compressed the major cities in mainland China into these small lanes where the houses reside. The traces of Japanese colonization were erased and replaced by Chinese decorative patterns. In schools, students continued to remember a past that they had never been and for a future that will never happen; from the rivers, to mountains, mineral resources, and every detail of each location of mainland China. Through controlling all institutional apparatuses and public representations, the old soul of China became the newly constructed memory of all Taiwanese people in the Cold War context.

For a long time, the KMT regime had situated itself, or intended to situate itself, as the center of Cultural China, even though it recognized its "temporal" location in Taiwan is a marginal place. The contention of cultural legitimacy between the R.O.C. and the P.R.C. during the "Chinese Cultural Revolution" revealed that the KMT regime clasped "traditional" Chinese Culture to survive in Taiwan. The KMT managed close relationships with other overseas Chinese communities to retain its image as the leader of Cultural China in order to achieve financial support from the wealthy Chinese. Typical Chinese cultural practices were exported by the KMT regime from Taiwan. They were employed by overseas Chinese people as a way of educating the younger generation to maintain the ties with their cultural homeland, "China." The KMT regime intended to connect with overseas Chinese communities through cultural export in order to win their recognition of the R.O.C. in Taiwan.

In sum, the KMT regime in Taiwan withheld symbolic Chinese elements as

"traditional" cultural practices to proclaim its legitimacy and authority to represent China. The restored nostalgia toward the "lost" and "missing" China impelled the KMT regime to reconstruct a symbolic China "on" Taiwan, not only to comfort these new Chinese immigrants but also to remind the goal of fighting back. The KMT also had practical and political reasons to sinicize Taiwan: securing the privileged status of Chinese nationalists, decolonizing the Japanese-educated Taiwanese people, and "civilizing" the Taiwanese (southern) Han and Taiwanese Indigenous peoples. As a result, the people in Taiwan had lived in the fictitious version of China and in the identification of being "authentic" Chinese under the KMT regime.

### 3. Anti-Communism as Cultural Aesthetics in Taiwan

With the power of the armed forces, the KMT regime established itself as an authoritarian regime in Taiwan and imposed martial law on Taiwan from 1949 to 1987. Prior to the practices of Martial Law, Taiwanese people had suffered in the 228 Massacre,[20] the event which many cultural elites of both Japanese-educated Taiwanese (the Hoklo, the Hakka, and few Indigenous Peoples) and of newly Chinese immigrants (the Mainlanders) were arrested and killed. After being exiled to Taiwan, the KMT government stabilized and benefited from the Cold War ideology by announcing the R.O.C. as "Free China" in opposition to P.R.C. as the "Communist China" or "Red China" in the international domain. To demonstrate Taiwan as a "Free China," this

[20] 228 Massacre, also known as 228 Incident, is an anti-government protest and gathering suppressed by the KMT government with troops and guns. It happens on the twenty-eighth of February 1947 and the following 1950s is the era of "White Terror," in which many Taiwanese people have been arrested and killed by secret police system.

sovereign nation represented all kinds of traditional Chinese practices as "national cultures." The tight binding between Chinese traditional culture, anti-communism, as well as patriotism was the KMT regime's survival strategy to suppress the internal resistance and obtain external supports.

For Taiwan, the 1950's was an era of White Terror under the martial law imposed in the name of Cold War witch-hunting for left-winged intellectuals or communists. It is similar to the Red Scare and McCarthyism in the United States when the government openly and secretly inspected every action of its citizens in order to expel the influence of Communism. The KMT government in Taiwan organized a tight operational system with strict governance on all kinds of institutions and organizations. As a result, political correctness in showing patriotism was the priority of artistic activities to avoid any trouble, regardless of their original expressions and meanings. In other words, all artists had to "perform" their obedience to the nation-state that sometimes was held at a superficial level, such as slogans and titles.

The political ideology and "correct" directions of cultural activities were announced in several of Chiang Kai-Shek's lectures and were supported and practiced through what Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser called "ideological state apparatuses."[21] Examples of these include: institutions, mass media, culture, and arts organizations. Chiang Kai-Shek, president of the KMT government, announced that dance would become one of the most important subjects in the citizens' education in 1953. Chiang interpreted

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[21] L. Althusser, "Ideology and ideological state apparatuses (notes towards an investigation)," *The anthropology of the state: a reader* 9(2006).92.

Confucius's arguments and argues,

> *People said, "The lost manners (Li) should be searched from the folks." In our China frontier and locations, many religions have beautiful dances. We should research and develop them, and promote them to society as a major subject of citizen's education. As long as our education professionals and artists discover the goal of communist bandit is to ruin Chinese national cultural by employing the ugly, evil, and despicable "Yang-ge"*[22] *to destroy the aesthetics and moral perspective, they can acknowledge the important meanings of dance and put their efforts on improvement and promotion to general people.*[23]

From this announcement, Chiang posits dance as an important vehicle to educate citizens about the "beautiful" aesthetic that is "good" and "commendable." In this statement, the "aesthetic" is extremely politicized and bound with the ideological battles between the P.R.C. and the R.O.C. Under the announced anti-communism purpose in the Cold War context, what is hidden between the lines is the nostalgia toward the lost China in the name of the lost Chinese culture. By contrasting "good" Chinese national dance, i.e. Chinines *Min-Zu* Dance, and "bad" mass folk dance, i.e. *Yang-Ge* in this case, into

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[22] Originally the folk dance of peasants in the northern agricultural villages, *Yang-Ge*, is developed as a symbolic performance to express the overwhelming victory in China. For further discussion on how Yang-Ge is constructed to represent the Chinese Communist Party's rise to power, please see E. V. R. Gerdes, "Contemporary Yangge: The moving history of a Chinese folk dance form," *Asian Theatre Journal* 25, no. 1 (2008).

[23] Chiang Kai-Shek wrote Amendment to the Two Supplementary Chapters of Education and Recreation in "The Three Principles of the People."

ideological binary, Chiang discloses his principle on dance that requests cultural elites to restore "the lost manners" from the folk and religious dances in China in order to discipline both the body and the mind of the good citizens in Taiwan. Chiang also held dancing as a bodily discipline that people embody and internalize the "good" aesthetics and therefore, moral principles and "correct" ideology. He encouraged dancers to construct massive but well-disciplined dancing bodies that devoted themselves to the nation-state. In response to Chiang's cultural policy, the "Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance Promotion Commission" was built in 1953. The combination between Chinese nationalism and anti-communism was, as a result, firmly bound a "correct" direction for artistic creations in 1950s Taiwan.

Supporting Chiang's lecture in 1953 that argued "eradicating the Red poison (i.e. communism) and Yellow harm (i.e. sexuality)," the semi-official and the largest cultural organization, "Chinese Writers' & Artists' Association" (CWAA),[24] which was mainly organized by anti-communism literature professionals, claimed the "Cultural Sanitation Campaign" in 1954. The announcement of this cultural movement disclosed how intellectuals actively took over the responsibility of "cleaning" into the public censorship (by CWAA) and into self-censorship (by intellectuals themselves). Under the pressure of the "White Terror," all publications and performances were inspected by the Intelligence Office of the Ministry of National Defense. In order to avoid being caught and sent to jail, Taiwanese intellectuals adopted strict self-censorship that followed the "correct" direction

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[24] Chinese Writers' & Artists' Association" was the most important art organization at that time. If one writer was not accepted by this association, he or she rarely published any work.

and "good" aesthetics by definition of the KMT regime.

In 1966, Chiang announced the "Chinese Culture Renaissance Movements" [25] in opposition to the "Cultural Revolution" in the Mainland China. After displacing and relocating for more than one decade in Taiwan, the KMT government proposed its anti-communist policy by renewing different kinds of "cultural movements" under the martial law to maintain its legitimacy in ruling the Taiwanese people without proceeding to democratic governance. The calling for the glory of the Chinese traditional cultural properties from the past was the KMT government's major strategy to maintain the (imaginary) feeling of war time and to keep Taiwan as the representative of "China."

In Chiang's declaration of "Chinese Culture Renaissance Movements," he constructed a liner tradition from the cultural, philosophical and political legitimacy that connected the practice of "Three Principles of the People" to the previous "Saints" in Chinese history. He argued that,

*After the legitimacy of Yao, Shun, Yu, Tang, Wen, Wu, Zhou Gong, and Confucius, our five thousand years of Chinese traditional culture almost disappear. It is lucky that the birth of Sun Yat-Sen who invented "Three Principles of the People" to continue this tradition.*[26]

By constructing this tradition, he also empowered himself as the successor of this

[25] The Chinese Culture Renaissance Movements was launched on November 1966 as the first structured plan of the KMT government to further sinicize and construct Taiwan under cultural China.

[26] Chiang Kai-Shek. "The Memorial Article on the 100th Anniversary of Sun Yat-Sen's birthday."

legitimacy, by holding the revival of Confucianism and with “Chinese Culture Renaissance Movements” in Taiwan, to rationalize his anti-communism battle. Historian Shen, Sung-Chiao, in discussing how the imagination of a nationality was constructed in the late Qing dynasty, examine how a narrative of a common descent of Yellow Emperor and the kinship relationship of Chinese people is emphasized to support the building of modern China.[27] These symbolic figures were constructed by the revolutionists as a national narrative and as a historical “truth” to negotiate with different imaginations into nationhood. Chiang extends this narrative and constructed himself as another national symbol to stabilize his status as the leader of Chinese nationhood in Taiwan. As a result, he continued his cultural policy to position the revival of “Chinese traditional Culture” in a binary between “Free China” and “Communist China,” which endangered and limited the artistic works and experimental creations.

However, the promotion of the “good” aesthetic, which emphasizes Chinese culture and Chiang’s interpretations of Confucianism, was not only an attempt of anti-communism but also a resistance to total westernization in the process of nation-building. In other words, it proclaims a Chinese approach to construct the nation-state and national body that are different from western models. Tracing the cultural movement “New Life Movement”[28] that Chiang proposed in 1934 in the early republic era of China, Chiang already claimed for a “pure” and “good” lifestyle for “Chinese” people to be qualified as

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[27] Shen Sung-Chiao, "The Myth of *Huang-ti* (the Yellow Emperor) and the Construction of Chinese Nationhood in Late Qing. (woyi woxie jian xuanyuan- huangdi shenhua yu wanqing de guozu jiangou)," *Taiwan: A Radical Quarterly in Social Studies* (1997). p1-77.

[28] For a detail discussion on “New Life Movement”, please see Arif Dirlik, "The ideological foundations of the New Life Movement: a study in counterrevolution," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 34, no. 4 (1975).

the citizen of the R.O.C. He identified certain details of lower-class life and western-bourgeoisie life as the elements of "evil" such as laziness, dirtiness, luxuriousness, and flaunts, which should be "cleaned out." This kind of cultural movement was extended and can be seen in later cultural movements in Taiwan. They required "Chinese" citizens to perform self-cultivation and self-governance on their bodily behaviors, which was believed to influence the mind in order to submit their subjectivity, the national body, to the governance of the nation-state, the R.O.C.

Therefore, the development of literature and other cultural and arts creations in 1950s and 1960s Taiwan was guided and inspected under the KMT's different cultural movements in the configuration Chinese nationalism; restorative nostalgia and anti-communism. During the time martial law was enforced in Taiwan, freedom of speech and creation was prohibited and damaged in the name of anti-communism. Taiwanese intellectuals passively followed the political correctness and actively internalized the political censorship. They were encouraged to create the works of "traditional" Chinese culture with the "pure" and "clean" aesthetic that the KMT regime recognized. The governance of artistic creation and people's life contributed to the militarized, and therefore, nationalized, body of Taiwanese people. In other words, these restrictions and regulations on Taiwanese bodies subjected the individual into the oneness of national body by disciplining and objectivizing their bodies. Taiwanese people were trained to be Chinese under the KMT's construction.

**Section Two: The Construction of Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance in 1950s and 1960s Taiwan**

**I. Overview: Situating Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance in Taiwan**

I use the term "Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance" to refer to a specific category of "traditional" dances that were promoted by Chinese Nationalists.[29] In Taiwan, Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance was popularized in the annual dance competition held by the Taiwanese government since 1953. In its early stages, the dance competition set five sub-categories of Chinese *Min-Zu* dance from their social functions: martial, labor, ritual, entertaining, and artistic. It was not until the 1970s that the dance competition began to use "classical dance" and "folk dance" as sub-categories; one for constructing historical past and the other for constructing anthropological folks, which I will discuss later. This ambiguity of the term "*Min-Zu,"* as I discussed in the previous section, reveals the problematic construction of "Chineseness" and its changing definitions in Taiwan. the complexity of this term also allows the boundaries, content, and interpretations of Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance to be defined and redefined according to the different political and social contexts.

First, Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance was ironically generated in 1953 from the need in Taiwan to stage a "good" traditional Chinese dance in opposition to the "evil" Chinese dance of the People's Republic of China (P.R.C.) regime in China. The content of Chineseness in Taiwan was problematically frozen in pre-1945 mainland China, with a sense of nostalgia longing for the "lost" mainland China, embodied in the imagination of Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance in Taiwan. Second, Chinese *Min-Zu* dance also includes the

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[29] I must remind my readers that the developmental history of "traditional" Chinese dance is different in Taiwan (The Republic of China, R.O.C.) and in China (the People's Republic of China, P.R.C.) after 1949 due to the separation of the two politic regimes, even though they share some common visions of "greater Chinese culture" in the same sense.

category of “classical dance” that was recorded in historical and archaeological evidences of imperial China. This intension illusively points toward a linear history of Chinese people, while a fixed and common Chinese “national past” never existed. Lastly, the ambiguity of Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance in Taiwan is most demonstrated by its content of folk dances. This category is entitled to include every dance practice from different ethnic communities in (the lost) Mainland China, while it was constructed in Taiwan. It provided a mapping of the imagined ethnic groups of China, which indicated the imagination of a national boundary and performed an illusory “republic” of the “Five Ethnic Groups” on the stage of Taiwan.

While most folk or national dances obtained their authority from history or practices that were rooted in their people’s lives, Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance was not only displaced, it was also hardly to be settled in Taiwan, due to the strong nostalgia it invoked. Anthropologist Allen Chun employs Philip Abrams’ “collective misrepresentation” to critique the KMT’s cultural nationalism as a “sense of virtual reality” that generates “the myth of historical-cum-cultural destiny”.[30] The restorative nostalgia that the KMT government held contributed to the reconstruction of Chinese architecture, visual images, and cultural practices in Taiwan, in which the KMT’s “politics of unreal”[31] disclosed the virtuality of the Chineseness. Demonstrated in the embodiment of the Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance on Taiwanese dancing bodies, the construction of Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance in Taiwan encouraged Taiwanese people to perform the official version of the beautiful

[30] A. Chun, "Ethnic Identity in the Politics of the Unreal," *Taiwan in Comparative Perspective* 1(2007).p78

[31] Ibid.p78

fantasy toward the homeland, China, even though these fantastic dances often concealed and mixed with their own different social memories and family histories in Taiwan.

However, through the embodiments and practices passed down from generation to generation, these misrepresentations of "Chineseness" have been part of Taiwanese culture and already combined local transformations. It is illusive, fake, and imagined, but it also created, reinterpreted, and hybridized a sense of displacing and relocating these nostalgic longings. The meaning of Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance, which is choreographed and practiced by Taiwanese dancers, is changing in different contexts and on different bodies. Popularized by institutional apparatuses and public demonstrations since the 1950s, this nostalgic version of old China is shifted in local interpretations and is a part of the recent cultural memory of the Taiwanese and overseas Chinese communities. The virtuality of the Chineseness is circulating, reproducing, and crystallizing on the different dancing bodies of Chinese diaspora communities as it maintains its visibility of being Chinese on a global stage.

## II. Constructing the National Dance from World-Widely Anthropological Interests

The concept of Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance was formulated and accepted by Chinese intellectuals, who had encounters with Western concert dance and folk dance in the late Qing dynasty.[32] Influenced partly by western education, the staging of western dance

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[32] In the Qing dynasty, Chinese theater, which combined acting, speaking, singing, and dancing, is the major form of entertainment among the noblemen, cultural elites, and common people in China. The concept of Chinese dance, an artistic form of dancing with music, is a recent imitation of western concert

companies in China, and partly by Japanese's interest in "oriental dance,"[33] some Chinese scholars started to consciously collect folk dances of ethnic minorities and construct the concept of Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance after the revolution of the R.O.C. (1912). The effort to collect folk dances of China was not only influenced by anthropological interests on non-Western cultures but also intended to represent China as a modern nation-state that has its own cultural performance. Chinese dance choreographer and scholar Dai Ai-Lian,[34] who became the mother of dance in the P.R.C. later, was one of the most famous intellectuals who did ethnographic works and staged these folk dances during the early Republic era. Several of her coworkers and followers moved with the KMT government to Taiwan after 1949 and played important roles in the construction of the Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance in Taiwan.

Peking opera became an important resource and element in the beginning of creating Chinese dance as concert dance performance. For example, Chinese choreographer Wu Hsiao-pang and Taiwanese choreographer Lin Ming-Teh performed some dance pieces that abstracted from Peking Opera during their studies in Japan.[35] In the construction of

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dance. It does not mean that Chinese dance was invented from nowhere, because dance practices did exist in different communities as rituals or entertainment. It can be found in the history of ancient Imperial China as private performance to entertain rich people.

[33] There are some historical records indicating some Chinese or Taiwanese artists also staged some Chinese dance pieces that they transformed from Chinese theater while they studied in Japan. It is worth noting that they may never see or learn "oriental dances" from other countries in Asia such as India, Thailand, and Korea in the colonized mapping of Japanese and European imperialism. For the discussion of "oriental dance" in Japan and its relation to Chinese and Taiwanese choreographers, please see Chapter One of Ya-Ping Chen's dissertation.

[34] Wang Kefen and Long Yinpei ed. *Zhongguo jin xian dai dang dai wu dao fa zhan shi, 1840-1996.*, (Beijing City Ren min yin yue chu ban she, 1999).p72-80.

[35] Ibid. p64-70

the Chinese *Min-Zu* dance, Peking opera influenced the imagination and reconstruction of historical and classical Chinese dances.

The anthropological researches on folk dance and on the Indigenous Peoples' dances were largely encouraged by the KMT government. Starting from the very few "dances"[36] in Taiwan, choreographers drew their material from the ethnographic research they did on Taiwanese people and Indigenous Peoples. Their materials were "collected" from Indigenous Peoples' rituals, from the interviews of different ethnic minorities from China who moved to Taiwan, and from the local theater performances that they had seen in daily life. With the limited materials they had access to, choreographers in Taiwan applied their previous training and individual creations to compose these materials.

First, the research on Indigenous Peoples' dances was built both on anthropological interests to "preserve" the culture of "primitive people" and on political interest to "reform" their "vulgar" and even "immoral" ritual performances. These dance performances were generally called "*Sandi* Dance," drawn from the term "*Sandi* People," meaning "High Mountain Tribes," which was used to call the Indigenous Peoples of Taiwan by Han people at that time. *Sandi* Dance became a category and this naming was implied to all Indigenous Peoples' dances, reformed or not reformed by the Han people, in the 1950s and 1960s Taiwan. The simplified and civilized *Sandi* Dance is widely

[36] Several choreographers and Taiwan dance history argues that Taiwan was "the desert of "dance," which means there were no dances and a lack of dance performances, before Japanese colonization. However, I do not totally agree with this statement because it depends on the definition of "dance." If its definition includes all bodily related performances, there were many Indigenous Peopless' ritual performances as well as local rituals and theater performances of the Han ethnicity before the Japanese colonization of Taiwan. In other words, the statement that Taiwan had no dance is only true when we use the definition of "concert dance," which is performed with music in western theater.

performed by the Han dancers in Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance concerts, military entertaining activities, schools, commercial shows, and other public ceremonies because of its relatively "easy" steps. It is also performed by indigenous dancers for tourists in shows at hotels and restaurants to display their "authentic" indigenousness, especially when it took place under the policy of Taiwanese Tourism Promotion in the 1960s.[37]

On one hand, Taiwanese choreographers, following the government policy in situating Indigenous Peoples of Taiwan as "the primitive other," conducted anthropological approaches to learn and record their rituals and steps for the purpose of "preserving" their culture. On the other hand, with the KMT government's support and funding behind the *Sandi* Life Reform Movement, several choreographers used these materials to "reform" *Sandi* Dance by separating their movements from ritual meanings and simplified them in order to produce a "healthier" entertainment that allows many people to dance together hand-in-hand. They further choreograph *Sandi* Dance into concert dance to perform on stage. The "reformed" *Sandi* Dance is practiced by many Han dancers and was even taught back to the Indigenous Peoples in order to "improve" and "civilize" their performances.[38] These choreographers, consciously or unconsciously, played an important role to infringe and to change Indigenous Peoples' performances.

Second, Taiwanese choreographers, who had never been to China, created their folk

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[37] As early as Japanese colonization, this kind of dance had invested in a theme park at Wu-Lai, which combined hot spring and Indigenous Peopless' performances. The KMT government followed Japanese policy to promote the Indigenous Peopless of Taiwan to attract international tourists.

[38] In 1952, the government held an "Improvement of *Sandi* Songs and Dances Workshop" and several important choreographers were invited to teach selected youth of Taiwanese Indigenous Peoples the reformed version of *Sandi* dances. Then, these selected Indigenous young people taught these choreographies to their tribes. Shian-zi Wu, *Lee Tain-ming: wudao huangyuan di kentuozhe* (Taipei: The Council for Culturl Affairs, 2004). p45-48

dances of “Five Ethnic Groups” of China from the oral descriptions of the very few ethnic minority people in China. With the exception of the choreographers, who just moved from China and may have seen some folk dances of the various ethnic minorities in China, most of Taiwanese choreographers had to interview these people and rely on their memory and descriptions of the performances they saw. With these rare impressions on their local performances in China, Taiwanese choreographers largely depended on their own imaginations and experiences on other international folk dances to choreograph the Chinese folk dances that they never saw. These inventive dance pieces are then presented as the folk dances of the five ethnic groups in China by Taiwanese dancers and even performed in overseas Chinese communities.

The last resource that these choreographers employed was the folk performances and local theater performances of Taiwan, such as the Lion Dance and Art Arrays that functioned as expelling the evils and bringing good luck. These performances were widely seen in ritual ceremonies and Chinese New Year in Taiwanese daily life. However, both Japanese colonial officers and the KMT government inspected and degrade the value of these local theater performances and ceremonies, because they caused a massive gathering and contributed to superstitious religious myth, which may threaten the political sovereign. Dance professionals choreographed and transformed these folk performances into concert dances.

In short, Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance had been constructed as a category of national dance of modern China by both Chinese nationalists and by dance professionals. While the KMT regime moved to Taiwan with very few resources to stage Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance, it

encouraged Taiwanese dance professionals to consult some living archives, such as Peking opera and Indigenous Peoples, and ethnic minorities from China to represent the multiple ethnic groups, with which these Taiwanese dancers may not culturally connect or associate. The appropriations of these ethnic and folk materials, with the influence of their previous dance training and their imagination toward China, helped Taiwanese choreographers construct a fictitious version of Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance to perform the Chineseness on the stage of Taiwan. Embodying an imaginary ethnic dance that one may never see, the Taiwanese choreographers' "creations" of Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance replaced the dances of these ethnic others in their life to be circulated on stages inside and outside of Taiwan.

### III. Performing Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance for Anti-Communist Narratives

In Taiwan, the revival of Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance was "instructed" by other artistic fields, especially by the intellectuals from anti-communism literature and Chinese theater. First, dance professionals were categorized as a sub-commission in 1952 under the Chinese Writers' & Artists' Association (CWAA),[39] which was mainly organized by anti-communism literature professionals and artists. This dance commission under CWAA was not only the major sponsor of the Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance Promotion Commission, but also shared the same group of dance professionals as their representatives did. In other words, the Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance Promotion Commission can be seen as the sub-

[39] "Chinese Writers' & Artists' Association" is the most important art organization at that time. If one writer was not accepted by this association, he or she rarely published any work.

commission under CWAA. Because of this, dance professionals mainly followed the principles that were discussed and formulated in CWAA. This hierarchy between CWAA and the dance community reveals the dominant influences of anti-communist literature professionals on the revival of the Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance. This means that the form and content of the Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance were expected to emphasize on the literary meanings of Chinese nationalism and anti-communism.

Second, the president of the Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance Promotion Commission, General Chih-Hao Ho, controlled as well as provided resources for dance and was a passionate writer and high-level general in the military. Ho announced that the goal of the Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance Promotion Commission is to "popularize creational activities in the military, encourage soldiers' passions of fighting, and create the arts of *Min-Zu* Dance."[40] Even though he mentioned the "art" of dance, his intention was to "clean and transform sick dances in order to enable individuals to have fighting spirit."[41] He regarded dance as a "useful" recreation for every citizen from nation-state's viewpoint and emphasized its social "function." The concerns about the function of dance became the official directions and guidelines for dance creations in the field of Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance, in which artistic and bodily expressions must be "meaningful" to nation-state and its society.

Also, Ho insists on the social and literary meanings of dancing, instead of considering bodily expressions as an independent art form. We can track his artistic ideal from his background in military literature, in which artistic creation functions as

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[40] Chih-Hao Ho, "The Meanings of Promoting *Min-Zu* Dance," *United Daily News* Jan, 24, 1953. 1953 #584

[41] Ibid. 1953 #584

expressions of fighting for the nation-state. Because Ho was a poet, lyricist, composer, and Chinese literary scholar, his interests affected the performance of the 1950s Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance He insisted that *Min-Zu* Dance must be performed with music containing lyrics. Many Chinese musical compositions and folk songs then added lyrics by Ho to express the battle of spirits or longing feelings toward the supposed but lost motherland, China. In this sense, although the dance performance was highlighted for its social and educational functions, its independent artistic and discursive values were not recognized and had to struggle with the text dominated ideology. As a result, most works of Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance were choreographed with these songs, by which their bodily narratives may or may not have fit comfortably.

Therefore, by tracing the cultural ideology, semi-official organization, and the hierarchy among different artistic fields, I disclose the dominant aesthetic and preferences that dance professionals confronted within their revival of the Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance. Dance was not conceived as an independent form of arts and was required to submit to the guidelines of anti-communist literature. Also, following the aesthetic standards that Ho raised, the creation of Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance was undercut as simply another artistic form that expresses literal meanings of languages, rather than itself a unique expressive form. However, the narratives of the dancing body could not be well contained and covered by these songs, which I will further discuss in my analyses later. Simply put, the beginning of *Min-Zu* Dance creations were expected to bind with the format of Chinese theater performances, accompanied by Chinese music, newly constructed lyrics, choreographing by stylized movements, expression of the nostalgic narratives, and

imagined images toward the lost China. All of these were often concealed under anti-communism slogans.

## IV. The Popularization of Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance

### 1. Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance Competition

The *Min-Zu* Dance Competition was the most important event of the dance community in Post-War Taiwan. It motivated and integrated all resources of “state apparatuses,” ranging from the “repressive state apparatuses” to the “ideological” ones, as Marxist Louis Althusser suggests.[42] This national dance competition was first raised in 1954 after Chiang Kai-Shek’s lectures in 1953. Its associated organizations included the KMT Party, Ministry of National Defense, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Affairs, Military Association, and the CWAA. The second year of this dance competition included more associated organizations, such as the National Assembly, Police department, Media Office, National Film Company, and National Film Production.[43] From the list of participated organizations we can find that both the “oppressive” state apparatuses, such as military and police, and the “ideological” state apparatuses, such as education, mass media, and arts society involved in this dance event.

Prior to the first *Min-Zu* Dance Competition, the Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance Promotion Commission held a *Min-Zu* Dance Appreciation Concert in 1953 to investigate and

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[42] Althusser, "Ideology and ideological state apparatuses (notes towards an investigation)."

[43] Li Tian-Min and Yu Guo-Fang., *A History of Dance in Taiwan. (Taiwan wu dao shi)* (Taipei City: Da juan wen hua you xian gong si, 2005).259.

demonstrate what exactly Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance could be.[44] In this demonstration, dance choreographers cooperated with Peking Opera professionals to create some examples of Chinese *Min-Zu* dance. In this concert, dances were inspired from Peking Opera as classical dance pieces, reformed as *Sandi* dances, and created as contemporary dance that expressed the labors and hopes to rebuild nation. These dances were created according to the functional standards that General Chih-Hao Ho had proposed. In the same year, dance choreographer Jui-Yue Tsai held a "World Dance Concert"[45] that staged the international folk dances and gained positive responses from audiences. In this dance concert, she performed *Indian Dance* and *Spanish Dance*, as well as some other folk dances that she learned or witnessed in Japan. These experiences of *Min-Zu* Dance, regardless of ethnicity or folk, contributed to the basic concepts of Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance in dance competition.

The creations of Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance were more than simply "traditional," they also needed to be functional to society. In other words, these dances did not have to be "old" to be considered *Min-Zu* Dance at that time. As I previously discussed, General Ho emphasized dance's functions, what dancing could provide for the nation-state, and cancelled the subcategory of artistic dance which he considered to be "meaningless" in 1964 in order to reaffirm his argument that dance should serve for society, not for artistic appreciation. From his perspective, no matter what was performed, all the dances that visualized the modern Chinese nation-state and KMT's anti-communism principle can be

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[44] Ibid.229-234.

[45] Jui-Yueh Tsai, *The Pioneer of Taiwan Dance: An Oral History by Tsai Jui-Yueh*, ed. Wo-Ting Siao (Taipei City: The Council for Culture Affairs 1998).70.

considered as a creation of Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance.

The importance and the popularity of the Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance Competition in the 1950s and 1960s are based on the national and even international visibility that it brought to light. This enhanced the economic, cultural, and social capitals of participating choreographers and dancers. The visibility of dancing was constructed under national control and recognition of the KMT government. As a result, the dances that were praised had to meet and even create the imaginations of Chinese nationalism and anti-communism on stage. Once a dancer or choreographer was recognized by this national dance competition, she or he was qualified as a dance professional to participate in dance society in Taiwan. This was the only way to be seen and recognized during the time when the dance major had not yet been widely established in higher education establishments. Also, the dance professional would gain the opportunity to perform, teach, and make money in all kinds of national and international ceremonies. Some of them even gained the opportunity to be a movie star or perform in films. In other words, dance competitions became a place for dance students to become dance professionals and become recognized by the nation-state and audiences.

Following the KMT's cultural policy, dance performances and techniques were transformed from Peking opera and ethnic materials to train Taiwanese dancing body, which may mainly accepted rhythmic training in school or ballet and creative dance in dance studios. The dance trainings brought from Japan by teachers turned into a (national) Chinese dancing body. Although the construction of Chinese dance was a contemporary attempt, Chinese nationalists proposed that Chinese *Min-Zu* dance should only include

"traditional" movements without any other Western or Japanese steps. By doing so, they also intend to erase the trace of Japanese and western influences on Taiwanese bodily and cultural memories to construct a national identity by creating a new kind of "boundedness," as Allen Chun argues.[46] The nationalist directions in Chinese *Min-Zu* dance intended to maintain the "pure" sense of Chinese culture and to construct it as something "natural." However, with previous dance training and body memory, choreographers still combined other dance techniques, masking them with "traditional" Chinese movements and costumes, which I will analyze later. As a result, within the boundary of traditional Chinese dance, choreographing Chineseness became a strategy to survive, but it also disclosed the failure and impossibility of a "pure" Chineseness at the same time.

Therefore, this national dance competition became a battlefield of defining and redefining what is Chineseness on dancing bodies. The debates on the "boundary," such as what kind of ballet techniques could be used and what kind of topic could be included, were tested and negotiated between choreographers and Chinese nationalists, who normally held the power to judge and decide. The ambiguous position of being Chinese outside of China and being "modern" Chinese was revealed in the shifting of these boundaries between what was too ballet and not skillful or between what was too vulgar and not ethnic enough. Chinese dance competitions were the official process of reorganizing what was the (national) Chinese dancing body that the nation-state required.

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[46] A. Chun, "From nationalism to nationalizing: Cultural imagination and state formation in postwar Taiwan," *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, no. 31 (1994).50.

### 2. Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance as "Good" Entertainment and Bodily Trainings

Except for the Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance Competition that was held once a year, dance performances were widely practiced in the military as "good" entertaining activities for soldiers and in schools as "healthy" bodily education for students. For these soldiers, when the schedule of "fighting back" to China had been postponed in the 1950s due to changing international politics, the KMT government sought leisure activities that could transform soldiers' energy while keeping their fighting spirits up. On the other hand, watching the performance of Chinese *Min-Zu* dance comforted people' nostalgia and further solidified their motivation to fight back against Communist China. While the soldiers, willingly or unwillingly, retreated from mainland China to Taiwan after 1949, what the KMT sovereign was really concerned with was the stabilization of their people's loyalty, both emotionally and physically. Except for the improvement of living condition and strict military regulation, the advancement of psychological and ideological education became an important task. Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance, as pure and good entertainment under the KMT government's cleaning policy, was chosen to provide bodily pleasure, lift national spirits, and staged to maintain the illusion of an ideal China.

At the same time, students in schools were also encouraged to practice Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance in order to perform their collective loyalty to the nation-state in school public meetings and ceremonies. Under the war-time political structure, school and students were treated as the extension of military and as the basis of future soldiers. The KMT government continued the physical training in schools from Japanese colonization, which trained students in basic military steps and solider-like regulation. Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance

was the other physical activity that they were encouraged to practice and learn. Schools were requested to participate in the Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance Competition every year in the name of promoting healthy entertainment for future citizens.

It was the *Sandi* Dance that first met the need to include a large number of participants to dance together, collectively moving within the same rhythm. For example, *The Celebration of Millions Mass* was the most welcomed choreography in the category of *Sandi* Dance, was later taught to be entertainment for the military, and even re-choreographed to stage the collective fighting narrative by Tien-Min Li.[47] According to the standard of “folk dance,” dancing hand-in-hand and step-by-step in a large circle with simplified, indigenous dance movements allows hundreds of people to dance together with unified simple movements. It was considered the best dance activity for soldiers because it inspired the feeling of solidarity and assembled many bodies in one. The entertaining *Sandi* Dance attached political symbols to itself in order to demonstrate the well-disciplined bodies in oneness. The white star with twelve lights, the symbol of the KMT party and the national flag of the R.O.C., was often held in the pattern of the dancing. The individual bodies connected tightly with their hands tied together and moved with others in simple but strong steps. The participants and audience felt excited by the powerful collective body, but also through mass media. All of the spectators in front of televisions were attracted to this kind of bodily spectacle and re-confirmed the power of nation-state.

Starting from this kind of martial body demonstrated by soldiers, the choreography

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[47]Wu, *Lee Tain-ming: wudao huangyuan di kentuozhe*. p45-48

of "group dance,"[48] which was often performed by schools in the Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance Competition also emphasized this kind of political spectacle to express the beauty of the grouped bodies. No matter which sub-category (functions) the dance performed, different patterns that were regarded as politically correct were demonstrated on the floor by the assembling of students' bodies. Some of them showed the political symbols of the KMT party and the R.O.C. regime, while some of them "wrote" the texts to express the political slogans, such as fighting, freedom, or success. As a result, students were trained to locate themselves on the right spot in the group. It was the submission to the group and the group leaders that students learned and internalized on their bodies in this kind of "dancing."

It was also the submission of self to the group, however, and to the nation-state that the individual constructed his or her own identity as a qualified good citizen of the R.O.C. Because the public display of Chinese *Min-Zu* dance represents the quality and reputation of the school, it was the best students with higher academic achievements and sometimes a good family background that would be selected to perform dances. The students established their self-esteem from the inclusion of this public display because they were selected to demonstrate the national spirits that qualified them as good citizens. As I mentioned, Chinese nationalists had long constructed the ideal image of modern citizen as a healthy, strong, energetic, and therefore, national body. From the New Life Movements in the 1930s to the Anti-Communist Movements in the 1960s, the reform of

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[48] I use "group dance" to translate the term "*tuati* dance" in a directly sense, to mean that this dance is performed by many dancers. Taiwanese dance scholar Ya-Ping Chen use "mass dance" to translate this term to specify this kind of dance highlights uniformity instead of individual creativity. Please see Ya-Ping Chen's dissertation, footnote 25. p63.

the Chinese body, by expelling the impurity, pollution, and weakness, had practiced under nationalization and modernization. As a result, Chinese *Min-Zu* dance as a “good” bodily discipline with educational and ideological meanings was widely practiced in schools to sculpt the national body of the next generation.

For dance professionals, it was both an honor and obligation to perform for the soldiers in the name of “appreciation for military” by providing entertainments. In the atmosphere and social structure of war-time in Taiwan, the opportunity to be invited to perform for a General in a higher position was a great honor and would help the performer increase their good reputation. Not only would the ministry offer some awards to the performers, but TV stations and newspapers also widely reported these dance performances that called for the mass audience’s attention. At the same time, under the guidelines calling for thrift in war time, the dance concerts for art’s sake were unwelcomed by the nation-state. Dance performances often had to be titled as “appreciation for military” or as “celebration for national hero” in order to follow the policy of nation-state, even on a superficial level. Under strict political censorship, dance professionals had to carefully present their political correctness in order to avoid the political persecution under the Red Scare and the White Terror. Performing for the military to show appreciation to the nation-state became a safe announcement for dance activities at that time.

As a result, Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance enjoyed highly visibility in many levels of daily life, from public gatherings to images from mass media. Most people saw Chinese *Min-Zu* dance in local and national ceremonies as well as in TV shows and films. The

visibility and widely-held interest in performing Chinese *Min-Zu* dance contributed to the "dance boom" and the quickly emerging dance society in Taiwan in the late 1950s. These dance repertoires and dance professionals were qualified and praised by the nation-state in dance competitions and were invited to perform in all kinds of ceremonies and meetings. They also gained job positions by teaching Chinese *Min-Zu* dance in schools, militaries, social communities, and international Chinese diaspora communities. The needs in the dance market also explained the important influence of Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance Competitions in the 1950s and 1960s when there were little-to-no dance programs in college and no dance certification in Taiwan. Under the strict censorship and national selection through dance competition, Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance was the opportunity for more security and resources for dance professionals to create and perform in Taiwan during this period.

**Section Three: Crystallizing Modern Chinese Female Body and its Escape**

**I. Overview**

Although the Chinese *Min-Zu* dance was a product of Chinese nationalism and anti-communism raised by the KMT government to maintain the R.O.C. regime in Taiwan was largely discussed, most of these discussions emphasized on how this construction is a negative nostalgia that suppressed the creativity of Taiwanese choreographers. There were few attempts to analyze how the Taiwanese choreographers theorized dancing bodies during this Chinese *Min-Zu* dance movement in detail, or how the dancing body of Chinese women was constructed and escaped under the political censorship of the Martial Law. Although I partially agree with this statement from my previous examination of how Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance was constructed from the sense of restorative nostalgia toward the "lost" China in the context of Taiwan; However, I would like to investigate how the dancing body may exceed this limitation. In this section, I want to further disclose how Taiwanese female choreographers constructed their subjectivity through their embodiments of the nation-state and later conduct some in-depth analyses of several famous Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance repertoires.

Prior to 1949, Taiwanese female bodies were mostly disciplined under physical education in public schools during Japanese colonization, such as gymnastics and rhythmic movement. Since the 1930s, Japanese government adopted "Kominka,"[49] a policy that intended to assimilate the colonized people into a Japanese identity and devote

[49] "Kominka" was an assimilation movement launched by the Japanese colonial government in Taiwan from 1937-1945 which aimed at making the Taiwanese true Japanese. In fact, it was a policy to include the colonized people to devote their resources to the war.

themselves to the emperor of Japan in order to obtain more resources from the colonized land for the coming war. Therefore, in public schools, most male and female Taiwanese students accepted similar bodily disciplines that not only extended their bodily techniques but also standardized their bodily movements. The strategy of militarized student bodies was continued by the KMT government under Martial Law after World War II, regardless of its de-colonial and de-Japanese attempts.

However, Taiwanese female choreographers who studied dance in Japan had different bodily experiences from other Taiwanese women. During their stays in Japan, they were trained in ballet, Dalcroze's Eurhythmics system, oriental dances, and expressive dances.[50] They learned how to express feelings by choreographing dance movements with classical and modern western music. These Taiwanese female choreographers built their liberal and autonomous perspectives on dance as high arts. They extended their vocabulary and choreography in their dance training in Japan while they were still involved in performances that expressed Japanese patriotic spirits during the war time.[51] The various dance styles and practices were comprised into Taiwanese dance professionals' dance experience at the same time.

Bringing their knowledge and experiences of the Japanese version of western concert dance back to Taiwan as an independent artistic form, these Taiwanese female choreographers were confronted with Chinese nationalism and the traditional Confucius philosophy that the Chinese cultural elites proposed. From a previous section that traces

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[50] Several Taiwanese and Chinese choreographers learned dance from Japanese dance master who major in creative dance, ballet, and modern dance, such as Ishi Baku.

[51] For example, Li Tsai-Er performed dance for Japanese military during her study in Japan.

the hierarchy between literature and dance community, we realize the guided relationship between male leaders and female choreographers in which the dominant discourse was largely held by male writers. Tracing the published articles and newspaper reviews regarding the Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance or other dance performances in 1950s and 1960s Taiwan, we mainly hear the powerful voices from male writers in discussing the supposed meanings, social functions, and their suggested directions of dance performances. Very few articles discussed the choreography of dances, the bodily movements, and the artistic aesthetics of dancing that the female choreographers mastered.

Except for the traditionalism that was emphasized by Chinese nationalists, Taiwanese female choreographers were also confronted with a conservative attitude towards the performing female body in the traditional Taiwanese society in the early 1950s. Although receiving physical education in schools, most Taiwanese people still held negative attitudes toward theater performers who made performing a profession. They believed that there was an easy connection to prostitutes and beggars and that a woman dancing in public was damaging her social status. The denegation of body and dancing was rooted in the conservative interpretations of Confucianism and the very low social position of performers in both Taiwanese and Chinese society. Except for some newly western-educated cultural elites whom were familiar with the concept of dance as "high arts," most traditional intellectuals and general people regarded dancing as an immoral activity for women in the 1950s.

The fear of sexuality and bodily contact was most demonstrated in the "Ban on

Dance"[52] that was published in the 1948 and was resettled in Taiwan by the KMT government to prohibit mainly western social dance during the Civil War period. A distinction was made between Chinese *Min-Zu* dance as high art and healthy entertainment, opposed to western social dance as luxurious and wanton recreation. The ambiguous distinction between healthy and unhealthy dancing caused Taiwanese choreographers to suffer the frequent inspection of the police in the 1950s. After the widely held discussions in 1952, the KMT government adjusted its policy on the "Ban on Dance"[53] that prohibited personal operation of ballrooms, but allowed military ballrooms, providing the foreign, white, and therefore "exceptional" male soldiers' entertainment under government supervision.[54] This adjustment also suggested that dance professionals should choreograph group dances and songs as healthy entertainment and activities for society. From this statement, sexual expression and pleasure of dancing and the bodily contact between male and female on stage were seen as improper to the fighting preparation that is supposed to be maintained in the name of the Cold War.

Thus, with the male domination instructed from both Chinese literature and theater, as I mentioned earlier, along with the negative perception of female dancing body, Taiwanese female choreographers presented the Chinese female dancing body with

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[52] "Ban on Dance" was published in Shanghai during the war time, but its practice was not successful because of the protest of workers in the ballrooms.

[53] "Should dance be banned?" United Daily News, April,9, 1952

[54] American military stationed in Taiwan after the Korean War in 1952. Here I draw the concept of "exceptional body" from political philosopher Giorgio Agamben to highlight that these white bodies were outside of the political system of Taiwan, but here they occupied a privileged position. For more discussion on biopolitics and the violence of juridico-political system, please see Giorgio Agamben and ebrary Inc., *State of exception* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,, 2005).

nationalist narratives and conservative costumes on stage. Transforming the stylized movements and the exaggerated facial expressions from Chinese theater performance, Chinese *Min-Zu* Dances works were performed in motif-like movements. Without articulating weaving and therefore sexual motions and without exposing too many nude body parts, female choreographers concealed sexual expressions on bodily movements, while articulating them in a more subtle way. In other words, their works continually tested and challenged the boundary between the moral and the immoral female bodies, by the KMT government's definition, which I will demonstrate in later analyses.

In the following sections, I will separate some popular repertoires of Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance into two categories in order to analyze how the subjectivity of being a Chinese woman was constructed in Cold War Taiwan: one is classical dance, which emphasizes its historical reference; the other is folk dance, which emphasizes its geographic meanings and ethnic communities. I employ the two for further discussion because they signify the two dimensions of the ideology of Chinese nationalism: historical and geographical, in their construction of the illusive national dance. Examining these dances in relation to Chinese nationalists' restorative nostalgia and how Taiwanese female dancers tango with its limitation and benefits, I will first discuss how classical dances were reconstructed and "restored" from Peking Opera, and then analyze how folk dances were collected and "reformed" from ethnographic imagination and individual creations. From analyzing both perspectives of choreographing *Min-Zu* Dance, I not only intend to reveal their efforts on constructing a Chinese nationhood, but also investigate how women's dancing bodies negotiated with and redefined its boundary.

## II. "Restore" Chinese Classical Dance from the Past

As I mentioned, Peking opera was regarded as a comprehensive collection of the (disappearing) performing arts in the courts of previous dynasties. Taiwanese choreographers learned the bodily movements and appropriated the narratives and costumes from both Peking opera and other local theater to choreograph the dances recorded in Chinese history. From the perspective of the citizens, Peking Opera and its related performing style signified the "traditional" performance, since it was practiced before the establishment of the modern nation-state. As a result, the Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance that followed the performing style of Peking Opera shared the same authority with it as traditional and historical performing arts.

Internationally, Peking Opera is widely considered the national symbol of Chinese culture. The highly artistic reputation and position that Peking Opera enjoyed was actually achieved not long ago in the early establishment of the Republic. Benefiting from the location of the capital, Peking, and from Mandarin, which were named the official languages; Peking Opera was chosen and respected as a national drama, one of several national arts, despite other popular local theater practices. As Daphne Lei argues, "Chinese opera is a token that offers hope of imaging a Chinese cultural identity"[55] it was recognized as a popular symbol of China by both Chinese people and foreigners and continues to be so today.

Mei Lan-Fang's international touring performance contributed to the world-wide

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[55] Lei, *Operatic China : staging Chinese identity across the Pacific*. 1.

reputation of Peking Opera as one of Chinese national arts. Mei's performance style is actually an innovation to previous Peking Opera performance rather than maintaining its traditional formation. His innovation incorporated more bodily performance, i.e. dancing, into the structure of previous play. Theater scholar Nancy Yunhwa Rao discusses Mei's tours in New York in 1930 and argues that he provided "pictorial beauty" for "the western spectator's desire for objectification."[56] In other words, Mei's performances as well as Peking opera was iconized by the orientalist eyes of his international audience and therefore enjoyed their high visibility in the circle of Western artists.

The increase of dancing scenes and the incorporation of Chinese Martial arts in the late development of Peking opera became the two main resources for the construction of Chinese classical dance. The narratives and repertoires of (reformed) Peking Opera were also drawn into the topic and theme of dance creations. Many Chinese dance performances drew from Mei Lan-Fang's interpretations of innovative Chinese theater and took his dance scenes out for further choreography. The famous Peking Opera professional Ju-shan Chi was the teacher, director, and playwright of Mei in China and was highly respected and consulted by dance professionals. Most choreographers and dancers learned dance and techniques from Peking Opera professionals and theorists.

Chinese martial arts were another resource for dancers to learn fighting skills and movements to perform martial dance. Chinese martial arts were welcomed for their bodily techniques and fighting skills along with their ability to integrate into the martial

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[56] N.Y. Rao, "Racial essences and historical invisibility: Chinese opera in New York, 1930," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 12, no. 02 (2000).145.

scene in Peking Opera by becoming the performance between acts since the Qing dynasty. The famous movie star Bruce Lee also raised the international visibility and popularity of Chinese Martial arts. Similar to Peking Opera and Chinese music, the Chinese Martial arts were respected and entitled as "national arts" by the KMT government. Dancers learned boxing and weapon series and composed them into fluid movements to demonstrate martial spirits and better techniques in Chinese *Min-Zu* dance.

The other resource of Chinese Classical dance was to create the dancing from descriptions that were found within historical texts and paintings from the past. Some dance professionals who have grown up in China, such as Yen Kao, had more access to Chinese literature and related texts and could research in-depth, while most Taiwanese choreographers who only spoke Japanese before, were struggling to learn Chinese. From these historical texts, choreographers reconstructed these classical dances that were recorded and described. Most of these dances were practiced for ritual purposes in the courts of imperial China and some were for ceremonial purpose for the nobles. Since the 1960s, dance scholar and choreographer Feng-Shueh Liu conducted research on the dance notations reserved in Japan and Korean to "reconstruct" the dances of the Tang dynasty. These dances were qualified as court dances and were referred to as "moral dances" by Liu in order to distinguish them from other contemporary choreographies of Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance that were based mostly from imaginations.

However, the distance that Chinese *Min-Zu* dance was able to separate from Peking Opera generated debates about what is "traditional." Could Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance employ ballet techniques? Could Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance be "traditional" without using

the exact movements from Peking Opera and other historical texts? Could dance choreographers abstract some classical principles and aesthetics from Peking Opera and martial arts in order to integrate both with inventive dancing? In other words, the development of Chinese *Min-Zu* dance was struggling to become an independent art.

In the following sections, I will analyze two dances that demonstrate how Taiwanese female choreographers and dancers negotiated with nationalism and extended their bodily abilities in dance. The first one is Li Tsai-Er's[57] *Hua Mulan*. In this dance, female dancers perform in masculine roles that fight for the nation. The second is Yen Kao's *Lantern Dance*, in which dancers perform as court ladies with lanterns on their hands. By discussing the two examples, I will analyze how these classical dances staged the glory of Chinese civilization that Chinese nationalism claimed. I will also explore how the dancing body disturbed the "fixed" past, and at the same time, how Taiwanese female choreographers used the Chinese *Min-Zu* dance as cooperation with Chinese nationalism and as a high art to be recognized by society as artists.

1. **Performing National Heroine: *Hua Mulan***

The visibility of the story of Hua Mulan in many kinds of cultural performances demonstrates how Chinese nationalism imagined a Chinese nation-state by staging this "national heroine" in Cold War Taiwan. In the 1950s, the classical dance rendition of the story of Hua Mulan[58] from the Chinese theater repertoire was performed by Li Tsai-Er

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[57] Lee Tsai-Er (1926-present) is one of the first-generation of Taiwanese choreographers. She studied dance with famous Japanese choreographer Ishii Baku and actively choreographed dance in southern Taiwan. Please see Tsai-Er Lee, *The Pearl of the Beautiful Island*, ed. Chi-Fang Chao (Taipei city: The Council for Culture Affairs, 2004).

and later by other choreographers. In the Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance Competition and other performances in national ceremony, the theme of Hua Mulan was welcomed by the nation-state and repeatedly staged with different choreography. Although these classical dance routines were choreographed and performed by different choreographers in past visual records, I tracked the possible content and social meaning of this dance from the story of Hua Mulan and its performance in Chinese theaters.

To begin with, the visibility of Hua Mulan is generated from the nationalists' revolution to construct a modern Chinese womanhood. Its original story emphasized the filial piety of Mulan which drove her to scarify herself to join the army. However, the institutive story was shifted somehow differently in the service of Chinese nationalism in the late Qing Dynasty. Women's studies scholar Joan Judge, in her analysis of how the image of a martial heroine was constructed in late Qing women journals, suggests that Chinese nationalists used Mulan's story to promote martial spirits to defeat colonial powers, and also to emphasize that she devoted herself to her "nation" rather than to her family.[59] Therefore, Mulan was held by Chinese nationalists as the model of the Chinese "new woman," who should devote herself to the national crisis.

Also, while Taiwanese choreographers constructed the classical dance *Hua Mulan* from Chinese theater repertoire as a dance from the past, the play of *Hua Mulan* is in fact relatively new. Mei's performance draws its narrative from the "Mulan Ballad" that was circulated in the Northern and Southern Dynasties (386-589 A.D.). Mei's *Hua Mulan* is

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[58] It is recorded that Hua Mulan concealed her beauty and dressed herself as a male soldier to replace her old father to go for an army calling.

[59] J. Judge, "Talent, virtue, and the nation: Chinese nationalisms and female subjectivities in the early twentieth century," *American Historical Review* 106, no. 3 (2001).

staged in Peking surrounded in an atmosphere of anti-imperialism in the early Republican era and praised for its martial spirits for the nation-state; a departure from the domestic female topics in Mei's other plays. His performance of *Hua Mulan* created a new space for him to impersonate and change his character between Dan (female role) and Sheng (male role) in the same play. While Mei successfully created *Hua Mulan* as his new play, other local theaters also invented and added different versions of *Hua Mulan* in their theater traditions.

Tsai-Er Li, a Japanese educated Taiwanese choreographer, choreographed *Hua Mulan* and was inspired by a local Taiwanese theater's performance in south Taiwan. Other choreographers also staged performances according to either Peking Opera or to Mulan Ballad at the same period. Before and during Japanese colonization, theater troupes from China were sometimes invited to perform in Taiwan and influenced local Taiwanese theater. According to the description and photos in Li's biography[60], she mainly performed the martial scene of *Hua Mulan* and danced with a sword. She dressed in a traditional male Taiwanese costume from a local theater and her outfit shown in the photo is not as complicated as the costume in Peking Opera. Although she does not describe the details of her performance in her biography, she emphasized the fighting movements she learned from her Chinese martial arts teacher and Taiwanese local theater professionals.[61] Tracing the political context in which Tsai-Er Li situated, staging *Hua Mulan* can be interpreted as Taiwanese choreographers negotiating between political

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[60] Lee, *The Pearl of the Beautiful Island*.

[61] Ibid.

censorship, the national notions of Chinese womanhood, and the freedom of dancing expression. Although the freedom of female dancing bodies was once celebrated among Japanese-educated elites, the public performance of female body was considered an immoral activity for the rest of the people in the conservative society.

Considering the involvement of two gendered codified movement systems in the staging of *Hua Mulan*, the dancing techniques are not simply the disciplines of body but also the possible strengths and discursive abilities of female bodies. In dance scholar Susan L. Foster's article, "Choreographies of Gender," she critiques Judith Butler's accounts of "gender as performance" because this statement does not consider the materiality of the body. Instead, Foster employs the concept of "choreography" to analyze how gender identity is constructed in relation to bodies. She points out that a "dancer cultivates the body through training" and is therefore "appearing as one of the two sexes." [62] Her argument explains how gender identity is socially and culturally constructed through a series of arrangements and representational systems, in which the training of bodies plays an important role.

Accordingly, the performance of a martial heroine may allow female dancers and audience members to engage with masculinity by exploring differently codified movements in their trainings. In Chinese traditional performances, whether it is the female impersonation in Chinese theater or female dancer's performance, the stylized body movement and codified dance vocabulary signify the sexual identity of the character on stage, regardless of the performer's actual sex. The distinguishing systems

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[62] S. L. Foster, "Choreographies of gender," *Signs* 24, no. 1 (1998).7.

not only separate male and female movement but also separate the civil and fighting narratives. The performance of *Hua Mulan* and the display of masculinity on the female body may allow the female audience to identify with their gendered position and possibility. As dance scholar Susan Manning argues, Mary Wigman's problematic tension between feminine and masculine may offer her audience female spectatorship.[63] I argue that the performance of *Hua Mulan* may also provide its audience a space to test out the alternative gendered expressions. In other words, female dancers and the female audience may gain empowerment through performing and appreciating the martial heroine, respectively, while this empowerment also matches the interests of Chinese nationalism.

As a result, from the perspective of female dancers, the training and the performance of masculinity, fighting, and courage may temporarily reinforce their strengths on stage or even compel confidence in their daily life. From the perspectives of female spectators, the figures of female warriors may represent the possible empowerment and equal skills that are competitive to men. But at the same time, this kind of female courage provides currency to *patriarchic* ideology, to nationalism rather than to feminist consciousness. Either empowering or subverting women in the image of a martial heroine, these performances always seem to satisfy male spectators. These performances not only provide the pleasure to watch women performing in masculine roles, they also fulfill patriotic imagination and male self-esteem to win the war. In their eyes, if women can gain victory over barbarians, although on stage, so can men.

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[63] Susan Manning, *Ecstasy and the demon : feminism and nationalism in the dances of Mary Wigman* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). 44.

2. **Staging the Docile Female Body: *Lantern Dance***

Another example of how Chinese nationalism constructed a glorified past is the *Lantern Dance* which was transformed from archive into repertoire by Yen Kao. Kao is a female dance choreographer, professor, and scholar who was born in mainland China and moved to Taiwan with the KMT regime. As a major supporter of the Chinese nationalists' calls to revive the Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance, Kao's choreography intended to represent the past civilization of China, which was lost and only traceable from the limited archive. *Lantern Dance*, which is recorded in texts as a court dance, is selected to represent the glory and great civilization of the past Chinese empire, where the collective home is projected in Chinese nationalism.

Kao's *Lantern Dance* is a group dance and performed by twenty female dancers.[64] Each dancer hands a big, heavy, and classical style lantern with light in it. These female dancers wear traditional court maid costumes in Peking opera. The main visual impression is the different patterns that the lantern composes. There is no big step or big movements in this dancing to keep subtle shifting from one design to the other. Dancers perform the dutiful girls with light smiles and are trained to be coherent in motion and breathing. In other words, this dance is choreographed like a beautiful moving painting to demonstrate the classical and noble qualities of court dance.

Svetlana Boym, in discussing "restorative nostalgia," argues that "home is not made of individual memories but of collective projections and "rational delusions" (43). While the KMT regime held revolutions to create the R.O.C. and were then exiled from

[64] My discussion here replies on the dance notation and description of *Lantern Dance*, in Yen Kao's book. *Min-Zu Dance*. Taipei, minzu dance committee.1960. 51-66.

their homeland of China, the performance of *Lantern Dance* becomes a ceremony of representing, reviewing, and reifying the projection toward imperial China, the "homeland" to which one can not return. As dance scholar Theresa Jill Buckland warns in her discussion on national dance, "audience and performers are locked in a mutually constitutive framework of interpretation and appreciation in which they, the modern, gaze at dance, the tradition;"[65] here, the staging of *Lantern Dance* provided this linkage between the past and present. Kao's *Lantern Dance* responded to the restorative desire of Chinese nationalism to hold and fix the glorified past on stage.

If read carefully however, the dancing body reveals the contemporality and newness of *Lantern Dance*. Yen Kao's book, "*Min-Zu* Dance," contains the descriptions and dance pictures as notations of her choreographed dances. In the introduction chapter she argues that all dances which originate from human activities are based on seven basic steps: walk, jump, leap, slip, skip, and gallop, which she regards as the nature ability of human being.[66] In dance practices, these steps are regarded as part of the Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance since they are regarded as universal in human beings by definition of the in-separating implications along the transparent line between traditions and contemporary, as well as the East and the West. Her personal dance history in folk dance training contributed to this preposition and definition. In Kao's *Lantern Dance* notations, she also employs the Chinese translation of Waltz steps and previous seven basic steps for detailing the movements. Although this dance incorporates Peking Opera movements, the performance

[65] Theresa Jill Buckland, "Dancing across Ethnography and History: An Introduction to Frameworks, Sources, and Identities of Past and Present," in *Dancing from past to present: nation, culture, identities*, ed. Theresa Jill Buckland ( Madison, Wisconsin: Univ of Wisconsin Pr, 2006). 14.

[66] Yen Kao *Min-Zu Dance*. Taipei, minzu dance committee.1960. 6.

of the *Lantern Dance* presented something pretty new for the audience at that time. The mixed training and techniques of western folk dance steps, ballet, and Peking Opera movements reveals the constructional essence of the *Lantern Dance* in the present.

As a result, by reading the dance practices of Chinese classical dance, we can disclose that these choreographers constructed, resisted or weaved in and out of the boundary of Chinese nationalism in their performances. Largely transformed from Peking Opera repertoires and movement systems, these classical dances intend to stage skillful heroine and beautiful court ladies to demonstrate the glory of imperial China. But in the case of *Hua Mulan*, the investigations of sexual expressions and masculine training sessions extended how far the female body stretched from their previously gender restricted bodies. Also, with the non-erasable traces of imperial and colonial history and memory, in the case of the *Lantern Dance*, their previous bodily trainings hybridized the nationalists' expectation to stage a pure Chinese past. In other words, the dancing body reveals the impossibility of a "pure" Chinese body that Chinese nationalism longs for. Both cases of Chinese classical dance revealed the failure to restore a fixed past and the impossibility to limit the physical strengths on these female dancing bodies.

By actively performing classical Chinese bodies on stage, Taiwanese female choreographers maintained their social status as cultural elites and enjoyed the appreciations of the general audience.[67] Different from Bharata Natyam that legitimated itself as high art through the participation of middle class women in the revival

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[67] Although this is arguable because Kao is a college professor who had already held a high social status, Taiwanese female choreographers, consciously or unconsciously, had to deal with the negative social impressions of the female dancing body.

movements,[68] the collection of Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance is the exact "form" which itself is regarded as respectable in that middle-class women are encouraged to participate and practiced by the nation-state, the R.O.C. Similar to Isadora Duncan, her spectators accepted her dancing body as "a sign of classical nudity" in which the concept of Greek "nature" "guaranteed the moral and the noble,"[69] The classical body of Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance assures the nobility of these female choreographers, regardless of their expressions and experiences in dancing.

### III. Mapping the Borders of China in Chinese Folk Dance

In the following sections, I will examine how the staging of 'happy folk' by nationalists and the cultural elites took advantage of ethnic and class others in the 1950s. The performance of "folk dances" in Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance involves both imperial attempts to represent the folk and restorative longing for the lost homeland, China. In order to map China with a colorful composition, Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance in Taiwan intends to stage "happy folks" of different ethnic groups. I will examine three folk dances to demonstrate the different positions of this mapping. The first one is Tsai Jui-Yueh's *Miao Girl Playing Cups*, in which female choreographers project their sexual expression into this imagined ethnic minority. The second one is *Sandi Dance*, in which female choreographers "reform" Indigenous Peoples' rituals into entertaining, simplified, and

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[68] Janet O'Shea, *At home in the world : bharata natyam on the global stage* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2007). 37

[69] Ann Daly, *Done into dance : Isadora Duncan in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995). 109.

beautified concert dance. The third one is Li Shiu-Fen's[70] *Tea-Picking dance*, in which female dancers embody the happy labors in the tea industry in Taiwan.

**1. *Miao Girl Playing Cups***

Jui-Yueh Tsai's *Miao Girls Playing Cups* is a famous and popular folk dance piece in the 1950s because of its novelty and fascinating performance. This dance demonstrates two cute girls of the Miao ethnic group dancing freely with each hand ringing two cups to make sounds and rhythms. Tsai draws inspirations from one of her student's description of how people danced with cups in his homeland, mainland China, before 1949. The music used with dance was also composed by the Classical Chinese Music Company from the student's memory of the melody.[71] More precisely, *Miao Girls Playing Cup* is an imagined folk dance of Miao ethnic group because it lacks real encounters and contacts due to the separation between Taiwan and China. Its illusoriness is most demonstrated by the fact that the Miao ethnic group in China never danced with cups, which is founded after the opening of cross-strait contact in 1980s. But this dance, although misleading, is sometimes still practiced in Taiwan and overseas Chinese communities and has become a well-known choreography of Chinese folk dance.

Tsai's *Miao Girls Playing Cups* emphasizes the sexy facial expressions of Miao girls by embodying their cute dancing in their drunkenness. In the article "Dance Teaching Material: Miao Girls Playing Cups" in the *Min-Zu Dance Journal*, the author Chin-Han

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[70] Lee Shu-Fen (1925-now) is a first-generation of Taiwanese choreographers. She studied Ballet and oriental dance in Japan and actively choreographed dance in Taipei, Taiwan. Please see Yun Yu, *A life in Dance: Lee Shu Fen* (Singapore: Lee Shu Fen & Dancers Society, 1995).

[71] Jui-yueh Tsai, *The Pioneer of Taiwan Dance: An Oral History by Tsai Jui-yueh*, ed. Wo-Ting Siao (Taipei: Council for Culture Affairs Taiwan, 1998).

Li documents Tsai's choreography of *Miao Girls Playing Cups,* including its simplified music scores, floor pattern, props, movement, and steps.[72] His notation records that the two dancers use their cups to signify their drinking in the second section with the main melody of music. Next, they toast each other to drink more and begin to dance in more passionate and fast movements with each other's cups hitting. Their performance of sexy drunkenness displays feminine facial expressions and slight freely dancing that was within tolerable limit.

Positioning this choreographer in the relationship between Han centralism and its others, the Miao ethnic group has long been seen as the tough ethnic other who lives in the southwest frontier land of the majority Han people. In the past, the Miao and the Han people were constantly fighting with each other for the natural resources in the process of the Han's expansions. It is not until the building of the Republic that all these "other" ethnic groups, (i.e. previous so-called barbarians by Han people), are claimed to be included into the mapping of China in order to "maintain" the completeness of the land. The Han majority has to repeatedly perform the actions of including and representing the colorful composition of "Chinese culture." These actions became a strategy to crystallize the border zone to stabilize the boundary of great China. The performance of the Miao on stage can be seen as a mapping of Chineseness, in which the Miao ethnicity became an inseparable "other" in the Chinese self. This mapping became somehow ridiculous in Taiwan as Chinese nationalists intended to maintain their longing for their lost homeland.

Female Taiwanese choreographers, however, took advantage of this longing by

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[72] Chin-Han Li. "Dance Teaching Material: Miao Girls Playing Cups" in *Min-Zu Dance Journal.*

projecting their freedom and sexual expression into what they imagined as being Miao girls, the exotic other they have never actually seen. Emphasizing her beautiful eyes and skillful arms, Tsai decorates her imagination of Miao girls with sweet facial expressions. The Miao girls articulate the freedom to dance happily without addressing wars or political needs. Countering with the construction of the classical and patriotic Chinese female body, the imagined Miao female body provides another space to express the oppressed desire. Dance Scholar Jane Desmond, in her discussion of Ruth St. Denis's *Radha*, argues that Denis presents the otherness of race, gender, and class on the white female body "as a site of condensation and displacement of desire."[73] Similarly, Taiwanese choreographers reposition their feelings to this exotic, imaginative, and happy dancing of Miao girl.

In performing the exotic ethnic other, Taiwanese choreographers still secured their elite status, because the performed "folk" is separated from the privileged self. Dance Scholar Priya Srinivasan argues that St Denis's white female body gave her the ability to "stage all various kinds of oriental dance."[74] While the dance of Eastern goddess legitimate St. Denis into higher class cultural elites, her sexual expression on stage is also secured in her representation of the exotic other. In other words, the privileged cultural elites positioned their desires on the performed body of others. Similarly, the exotic expressions of *Miao Girls Playing Cup* were not only welcomed by performers but also

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[73] J. Desmond, "Dancing out the difference: cultural imperialism and Ruth St. Denis's" Radha" of 1906," *Signs* (1991). 31.

[74] Priya Srinivasan, "The Bodies Beneath the Smoke or What's Behind the Cigarette Poster: Unearthing Kinesthetic Connection in American Dance History," *Discourses in Dance* (2007). 18.

by audience members because they offered more pleasure than the conservative images of classical Han women. Providing more freedom in the choreography and movements, this performance may also offer pleasure to the male audience to appreciate this exotic female body without fearing an invasion by immoral female bodies. In other words, performing the exotic ethnic minority, the alien other, secured the pleasure of appreciation from a distance.

**2. *Sandi Dance***

Another example is the *Sandi Dance* that was widely appropriated from indigenous performances and re-choreographed by Taiwanese dance professionals. As I mentioned, Taiwanese choreographers recreated the Indigenous Peoples' ritual performances into a simpler and "beautified" *Sandi* Dance. The popularity of *Sandi* Dance was also influenced by the first film in Taiwan, *Happenings in Ali Shan*, because its theme song was circulated by the general population and easy to dance to. Both *Sandi* Dance and the music were invented by Han people by imitating the performances of the Indigenous Peoples in Taiwan.

Taiwanese choreographer Shu-Fen Li[75] and her dancers in their Korean tour in 1953 performed a reformed *Sandi Dance*, *The Spring of Mountains.*[76] Their costumes were decorated with certain indigenous patterns and were middle-length sleeves and middle-length pants with the pant legs bound. They danced with bare feet and stepped heavily on

[75] Shu-Fen Li was born in Nan-Tou, a county in middle-southern Taiwan. During the Japanese colonization period, she studied ballet and "eastern dance" in Japan. She is an expert in choreographing topics which often expressed vivacious and joyful emotions such as laboring and working.

[76] My discussion here replies on the photos and narratives in Li's biography and in "Shu-Fen Li visiting Korea Program II" ( li shufen fanghan biaoyan jiemu zhier). *Min-Zu Dance Journal*,v2. No12. 13.

the floor. Their arm movements shake the small bells hung on their ankles and wrists to make the sounds. The theme of their *Sandi Dance* is about appreciating the moon, so the movements of kneeling down and praying to the moon are included in the dance. All dancers have a happy facial expression and cute angles in their gestures and movements.

Indigenous Peoples of Taiwan can be seen as an ambivalent other for Chinese nationalists in Taiwan, especially in the 1950s. It is because staging them is necessary to signify the R.O.C. in "Taiwan," while this staging also inevitably indicates that the R.O.C. cannot represent China. The performance of the *Sandi Dance* is caught in this ambivalence. This dance is popular as a means of representing the flavor of Taiwan, as a pacific island, to foreigners; however, it can not be held as the most important repertoire in the promotions of performances.[77] This is because the best representation of the R.O.C. on stage is supposed to be a Chinese classical dance, which signifies the valuable Chinese civilization. It is also because Chinese nationalists cannot tolerate being represented as the "uncivil" Indigenous Peoples. In other words, *Sandi Dance* must be included in the repertoires of Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance, because it distinguishes the R.O.C. in Taiwan from the P.R.C. in China, while it must be marginalized for its originality in Taiwan rather than in China.

For Taiwanese choreographers and performers, they feel fascinated about the "natural" passions in the collective *Sandi Dance*. Imitating the stamped steps and the weaving arms from the rituals of Indigenous Peoples, non-indigenous choreographers enjoy the cheerful

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[77] Fang Zheng."My opinion to the dance touring overseas"( wodui chuguo wudao de qianjian) United Daily News, Dec,2,1956.

energies in the dancing. Practiced in the plaza with hundreds of people, *Sandi Dance* functioned as a kind of social dance for Han people to dance hand-in-hand with men or with women, enjoying the physical contact with others. Performed in dance concerts, *Sandi Dance* is choreographed with technical leg movements, with some of them coming from ballet training for jumping higher and dancing “beautifully.” The “improvement” of the *Sandi Dance* gives choreographers a chance to insert their pleasures of dancing and their cultural tastes into their reformed version. For them, *Sandi Dance* is valuable for its natural vitality and less bodily discipline, which allow them to express their own feelings.

### 3. *Tea-Picking Dance*

The last example I discuss is the *Tea Picking Dance* which is Shu-Fen Li’s famous dance piece and was selected as a model to be performed in the *Min-Zu* Dance Competition in 1953.[78] This dance describes female laborers working happily in a tea garden. It is a group dance where Li employs large numbers of high school students as dancers to visualize their patterns and traces. Later, this piece is choreographed in an on-stage form which details more movements and facial expressions. The *Tea-Picking Dance* mainly presented the lives of local people in Taiwan, which is included into the definition of the larger “Chinese” as a sub-culture or local culture.

Because Li’s choreography emphasizes the facial expressions of dancers, the whole dance presents a cheerful atmosphere.[79] From the viewpoints of the general population, they feel that the *Tea-Picking Dance* represented the cute girls in their work. In the

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[78] Jian-Ying Lu, "Taiwanese choreographer dancing for Chinese Culture: Shu Fen Li," in *Taiwan Dance History* (Taipei: Council for Cultural Affairs, 1995). pp93.

[79] Yu, *A life in Dance: Lee Shu Fen*. Pp26

context of 1950s Taiwan, if the audience was comprised of lower class workers, such as tea-picking labors, they may feel happy to see their life performed on stage and TV. They are able to identify themselves with these dancers although their laboring was beautified in their performance. The portrait of happy working people also echoes to the need of Chinese nationalism to celebrate the freedom and democracy in the KMT regime.

From fieldwork in her hometown of Nin-Tou in Taiwan, where tea picking is the most common job for local people, especially women, Shu-Fen Li conducted research to collect the details of laboring movements and to beautify these movements into the choreography of her *Tea-Picking Dance*. With busy handling gestures, her steps are light, skillful, and elegant which might come from her ballet trainings in Japan. In the 1950s Post War Taiwan context where dance was regarded as the "natural" bodily ability which can be universally "read" by different cultures, the *Tea Picking Dance* from local Taiwanese culture was posited under the Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance to survive and transfer onto the Taiwanese body with its hybrid languages spoken.

However, a dance review criticizes the Japanese style of music in the *Tea Picking Dance* and suggests that this dance piece cannot represent "our" nation when performed overseas.[80] With her attempt to have the dance to be included as "Chinese," she changed the original music, which she edited from a local Taiwanese opera, and reasserted that she did not bring any ballet shoes with her to perform overseas.[81] In other words, although she apprised the Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance Movement which brought her to find her identity

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[80]Fang Zheng. "My opinion to the dance touring overseas" ( wodui chuguo wudao de qianjian) United Daily News, Dec,2,1956.
[81] Lu, "Taiwanese choreographer dancing for Chinese Culture: Shu Fen Li."

as Chinese, and enjoyed the Chinese culture in her later bibliography, there was nationalist tension and pressure for her to re-claim her Chineseness in 1950s Taiwan. That is to say, although the *Tea-Picking Dance* may represent local Taiwanese culture, it must be included into the larger national frame as one of the Chinese ethnic groups. By this inclusion, but marginalization, *Tea-Picking Dance* as a symbol redressed its value of composing a colorful Chinese culture.

In short, by reading the imaginations of happy folks in China and the transformation of indigenous dance in Taiwan, I argue that Taiwanese choreographers tactically express their sexuality by performing these illusive others. In their imagination of the ethnic minority others, Han choreographers displace their sexual desire on the performing of exotic others. They use these imaginations to maintain their freedom of dancing, and at the same time, separate themselves from "the folks." While Han ethnicity, like the white body in the United States, is privileged as the universal and center nation in Chinese nationalism, it is privileged to pass to the colorful other. Female Han choreographers project their desire of freely dancing on to the bodies of the others without endangering their social status. At the same time, they also assume the ability to (mis)represent these ethnic groups on stage, like a blank space that they can freely dye onto. As alternative bodily experiences are allowed by nationalism, regardless of their insistence on a noble Chinese womanhood, Taiwanese female choreographers perform these ethnic other to map an imaginary mainland China, where none can really return.

## Chapter Two

## Constructing Taiwanese Subjectivity: The Revival of "Native" Culture and Ma-Zu Religion in Taiwan

### Section One: Longing for Being and Becoming "Taiwanese"

The history of constructing Taiwanese subjectivity is a collection of multiple lines of events that are interwoven with (different groups of) Taiwanese people's colonized, diasporic, and relocated living experiences, collective memories, and different histories. Taiwanese people have struggled to construct a sense of being "home" and to move away from the fate of "Orphan of Asia."[1] In recent years, the construction of Taiwanese subjectivity has become a very heated issue that has been widely raised in both political debates and academic discussions. I will track the formulating process of Taiwanese identity, from its hidden period during Japanese colonization (1895-1945), to the Martial Law period (1945-1987), to its peak period of the "Taiwanese Localization Movement (*Bentuhua*)"[2] (1970s-now), and to recent debates on "Taiwanese Nationalism" and on

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[1] *Orphan of Asia* is the title of a novel written by Wu Zhuoliu in 1946. The narratives of this novel conjures the situation that at the time Taiwanese people tried to survive between Japanese imperialism, new colonial motherland, and China, the mother abandon them.

[2] In this dissertation, I translated the term "*bentuhua*" to "localization," while noting to my readers that it can also be translated as "Nativization" or "Indigenization" or "Taiwanization." The first two words of "*Ben-tu*" mean "native/original" and "the land/earth," so "*bentuhua*" is the enactment to make things and cultural representations located. Taiwan studies scholar J. Bruce Jacobs, in his article "'Taiwanization' in Taiwan's Politic," suggests that both "Nativization" and "Indigenization" confused this movement with Indigenous Peoples of Taiwan and proposes to use "Taiwanization." I agree with his first argument; however, to posit this movement as a response to globalization, instead of simply as an opposition to "sinicization" and to China, I use "localization" instead of "Taiwanization" that Jacobs proposed. For the politic positions of the different translations, please see John Makeham and A. chin Hsiau, *Cultural, ethnic, and political nationalism in contemporary Taiwan : Bentuhua*, 1st ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

"New Taiwanese" after 2000. My intention here is not to write a complete history, but to reveal that it is in a kind of historical, cultural, and political context that the Taiwanese felt as being in diaspora and generated the desires to locate and relocate themselves in a place called Taiwan, both physically and mentally.

## I. The Construction of Taiwanese Subjectivity before 1987

After World War II, "Taiwanese Consciousness" was generated in opposition to Japanese colonization and was later oppressed by the White Terror and by Chinese Nationalism of the KMT regime. There were debates on "Native Literature (*hsiang-tu* literature)" in the late 1970s. The claim for Taiwanese subjectivity was continuously articulated in the alternative political movement in the 1980s and released its multiple social and political discourses and debates after the lifting of martial law in 1987. The "Taiwanese Localization Movement" is an intention to locate both symbolic representation and practical life experiences in the land of Taiwan, instead of in a dream and diasporic sense toward pre-1949 China. Although this movement is often confused with Taiwanese Nationalism and criticized as an enactment of de-sinicization, I consider this intention of localization as a continuation from previous "Taiwan Consciousness," which will be articulated in detail later in the chapter. I start from the early stage of Taiwanese consciousness developed during Japanese colonization which contributed to the different cultural and historical experiences of different Taiwanese groups.

### 1. "Not-Real-Japanese": Taiwan's Self Consciousness Under Japanese Colony

In 1895, Taiwan was ceded to Japan as colonial territory by the court of Qing dynasty

in China because of the failure of Sino-Japan war (1894-1895), regardless of the large population of Chinese people in Taiwan. Different from previous authorities, the Spanish and the Dutch, which only partially occupied Taiwan, Japan was the first imperial power that had total control over the whole Taiwan and "colonized" and "developed" Taiwan with modern governmental techniques and changed every aspect of Taiwanese daily life such as language, clothing, customs, and culture.

Encountered with Japanese colonizers, Han intellectuals, who had resided with their families in Taiwan for several generations, proclaimed a sense of "us," the consciousness of "Chinese/Taiwanese self" in order to conquer and negotiate with the Japanese other. It is worth noting that this kind of consciousness at this time was generated from a feeling of being abandoned by China and of being humiliated by the status of Japanese colonization.[3] From the previous Han centralist viewpoint, Japanese people were regarded by the Han as a lower class civilization and barbarians of the East. Now the Japanese had become the colonizer of Taiwan, who ruled Han intellectuals, changing their ways of living, and having authority over them. Even though Taiwan was previously an island in the marginal position of the mapping of the Chinese Empire, the Han had gradually immigrated to and cultivated this land over past several decades. Their home in Taiwan, which was supposed to be part of China, was now given away by its motherland, China. The sense of dereliction caused from multiple foreign invasions and finally from this hand-over to Japan is an implicit basis of "Taiwan's Consciousness." The Han in

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[3] Leo T. S. Ching, *Becoming "Japanese" : colonial Taiwan and the politics of identity formation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

Taiwan mourned for the previous connection with China but they were now a colonized community in the land belonging to Japan.

In this early stage of Taiwan's self-consciousness, the Indigenous Peoples of Taiwan were excluded from the imagination of the Taiwanese-self by the Han-Taiwanese people. Even though Indigenous Peoples raised several anti-Japanese fights, resulting in many deaths and disappearances of indigenous communities, the alliance between the Han-Taiwanese people and Indigenous Peoples was rarely formed during Japanese colonization. For the Japanese colonial government, on one hand, it intended to include Indigenous Peoples of Taiwan into its modernization process and under its governance in order to grasp the rich labors of Taiwanese aboriginal people. The Japanese conducted a "civilization" approach to control Indigenous Peoples, such as moving them away from original locations in order to disperse their community powers and develop obedient leaders from educated indigenous intellectuals. On the other hand, the Japanese authority intended to maintain their "wildness" in order to promote Taiwan as an exotic pacific island for Japanese tourists. By doing so, Indigenous Peoples of Taiwan were constructed as the most identical cultural symbol of Taiwan and as the best colonized objects to demonstrate the greatness and the need of Japanese colonization/civilization plan in Taiwan.[4]

Anti-Japanese battles decayed under the oppression of the Japanese armed forces and in the Japanese-western education. In the early stage of Japanese colonization,

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[4] Shao-li Lu, *Exhibiting Taiwan: Power, Space and Image Representation of Japanese Colonial Rule (Zhanshi Taiwan: quanli, kongjian yu zhimin tongzhi de xingxiang biaoshu )* (Taipei: Maitian, 2005).

Japanese rulers mainly aimed at grasping natural resources in Taiwan and had more tolerance toward local Taiwanese culture. Later, in the expanded period of Japanese imperialism before and during the World War II, the Japanese raised the "Kominka Movement" to assimilate the colonized people in order to gain more human bodies and labors as another resource. The Taiwanese were educated to identify themselves as Japanese, as "the people of the Emperor," and to devote themselves to their "motherland," Japan[5]. The Taiwanese were, willingly or unwillingly, served as Japanese army soldiers or laborers during World War II, ready to fight and die for the "motherland," ironically, for their colonizer as well as for their "enemy."[6] Although the Kominka Movement was quite "successful" in Taiwan, compared the other Japanese colony at that time, Korea, Taiwanese people could always sense the colonized status of being "not-real-Japanese." As a colonized object, however, the colonizing-other had been integrated as parts of the colonized-self through the forced colonial influence. As a result, Taiwanese culture is already "hybrid" with its historical colonized reality of Japanese cultural influence.[7]

### 2. The Struggle for Taiwanese Subjectivity under Martial Law

In the domestic domain, the debates and the development of Taiwanese subjectivity are often tied to the historical confrontation between two Han Chinese (political) groups:

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[5] Please see chapter three of Ching, *Becoming "Japanese" : colonial Taiwan and the politics of identity formation*.

[6] Lu, *Exhibiting Taiwan: Power, Space and Image Representation of Japanese Colonial Rule (Zhanshi Taiwan: quanli, kongjian yu zhimin tongzhi de xingxiang biaoshu ).*

[7] Here I draw the concept of hybridity from Homi K. Bhrabhra. Please see Homi K. Bhabha, *The location of culture*, Routledge classics (London ; New York: Routledge, 2004).

*Benshengren* and *Waishengren*. This is so-called "*Shegji Wenti,*" the problem of different provincial Han people. *Benshengren* literally means "the people of Taiwan Province," and is employed as a self-position of the Han people who have lived in Taiwan prior 1949 and equal to the Hoklo and the Hakka in the narrative of four "ethnic" groups of Taiwan. *Waishengren* literally means the people from outside of Taiwan Province and is used to refer to the Han people who immigrated with the KMT regime after 1949, the Mainlanders. In this sense, the conflict between *Benshengren* and *Waishengren* was proposed as a division between "us," the insider, and "them," the outsider, and is the premier basis in the debate of Taiwan identity.

This conflict was generated by the dissatisfaction of the earlier Han immigrants in Taiwan, who had lived through Japanese colonization, toward the KMT regime and these new Chinese immigrants in 1949, who often enjoyed some privileges under the KMT's cultural policy in Taiwan. This conflict has its historical root from the suffering of 228 Massacre and the White Terror in the 1950s Taiwan, in which many *Benshengren* were killed without reason and had their voices silenced by the KMT sovereign. The fact that some *Waishengren* were also arrested and killed in these political persecutions was often ignored in these articulations. These traumatic collective memories among *Benshengren* built the foundation of pursuing an exclusive definition of being "Taiwanese," in which *Benshengren* often equals themselves to the term "Taiwanese" in opposition to *Waishengren*, the Mainlanders. The underlying tension had been articulated for political mobilization, which I will discuss later in the section on Taiwanese Nationalism.

In the international domain, the sense of Taiwanese consciousness, instead of a

Chinese one, is generally generated from the changing geopolitics in the 1970s and the KMT regime in Taiwan can no longer claim to be the representative of "China". As an ally of the U.S.A., the R.O.C. posited Taiwan in the global Cold War context instead of the Chinese Civil War and secure and stabilize its ruling in Taiwan. The dream-like American culture signified the goal and the destination of Taiwanese modernization, i.e. Americanization. America replaced Japan to become the first destination for studying and migration. Taiwanese intellectuals and artists learned from and were influenced by the mainstream American culture by the bridging of returned students and Chinese-American intellectuals from the U.S.A.[8] Even though the U.S.A. officially "abandoned" Taiwan in 1978, American still played an important role and influenced the political status of Taiwan.

Taiwanese consciousness is partly crystallized from the transnational experience of Taiwanese intellectuals, most of whom are second-generation Taiwanese regardless of where their ancestors were from. Taiwanese intellectuals, some of whom had experiences studying abroad, started to rethink their nostalgia for "home" in Taiwan and sought the answers of "who are we?" Though the KMT regime blocked all information and contact with mainland China, it was sometimes through the experiences of studying abroad that the Taiwanese came to read the information of modern China (the P.R.C) and started to identify with their home in Taiwan. As scholar Horng-Iuen Wang points out, transnational experiences influenced Taiwanese people to identify themselves either "not-real-Chinese"

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[8] Please see Yuh-jen Lu, "*Wrestling with the Angels: Choreographing Chinese Diaspora in the United States (1930s-1990s)*" (New York University, 2002).

or "Taiwanese," and they started to shift their focus on the silenced history and culture of Taiwan in reality.[9] As a result, Taiwan, the location of one's physical home, largely entered as the discursive topic and raised in the literature debates.

In the late 1970s, the KMT government, leaded by the president Ching-Kuo Chiang (1978-1988) started to localize and democratize the regime in Taiwan. With the dynamic changing of international politics, in which R.O.C. was no longer able to represent an authentic China, and the impossibility of fighting back, the KMT regime adopted indigenization as its policy. First, several important and fundamental developments, such as "Ten Major Construction Projects,"[10] were started and provided a foundation for later economic achievements. Chiang also implied some reformed in political system to allow more non-KMT and *Benshengren* to participate in government services and hold important political positions. He also stopped the "tradition" as the way that her father Kai-Shek Chiang "passed" the president position onto him and announced that the Chiang family will never participate in political elections. His insistence and release of political power constitutes to the democratization of Taiwanese political environment and offer space for the later alternative political movements. Finally, Chiang liberalized political restrictions on civil rights and terminated the Martial law in 1987, facing the huge demands for a democratic society from Taiwanese people.

Chiang's political and cultural policies can be seen as part of the "Taiwanese

[9] H. L. Wang, "National culture and its discontents: The politics of heritage and language in Taiwan, 1949-2003," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 46, no. 4 (2004). 101.

[10] "Ten Major Construction Projects" includes several transportation projects, such as high way and airport and industrial development, such as steal and nuclear power energy.

Localization Movement," although the strong supporter and announcer of this movement was his successor, the president Teng-Hui Lee (1988-2000). In the 1980s, the new project of "Cultural Reconstruction" demonstrated the KMT's transformation of its cultural policy to construct Taiwanese cultural representations that is located at its physical location of Taiwan in response to the rising consciousness of local culture. *Hsiangtu* (native) arts and cultural expressions that narrate daily life experiences of agricultural society and folk villages in Taiwan are encouraged. Although keeping Chinese Nationalism as its central ideology, the KMT regime positioned Taiwanese local culture as a branch under the larger categories of "Chinese culture," its localized cultural policy recognize that the Taiwanese people has formulated their own culture that cannot be simply replaced by their "restorative nostalgia" for the "lost" China.

Also, situated in the global context, the localized Taiwanese culture offered a possible currency for internal and external consumption and tourism. As Chun argues, "this trend toward the secularization of culture was simply an attempt to sublimate the hegemonic character of Cultural China and to cultivate them into objects of desire that could be manipulated by the full force of the culture industry"(14). In this sense, the KMT's localization attempt was not only a survival strategy in response to its loss of the authority and the legitimacy to represent the "real" China, it also fulfilled the need to be somehow differently self-represent itself in the mapping of Chinese culture by transforming Taiwanese local culture into another commodity that could be controlled by the nation-state. With the awareness of geopolitics of Taiwan, the KMT regime adjusted its strategy of cultural representation that could be distinguished from the R.O.C. in

Taiwan from the P.R.C. in China on global level.

Under the KMT totalitarianism and censorship, a more concrete discourse on "Taiwanese consciousness" was firstly visible in the debates of literature aesthetics in the 1978-1979 between *Hsiangtu* (Nativism), which focuses on daily life of Taiwanese rural and village, and Modernism, which emulates western literature that emphasizes artistic autonomy.[11] The proposed direction and ongoing discussion of *Hsiangtu* literature with its underlying issue of Taiwanese subjectivity intended to look for an alternative way out from previous nostalgic literature (toward China) and modernism texts (American model) unrelated to most Taiwanese people's life experiences. Suppressed by the KMT regime, *Hsiangtu* literature was accused by Chinese nationalists as being similar to communist literature, which posited the supporters of *Hsiangtu* literature in a dangerous entitlement.[12] Soon after heated discussions among the intellectuals, the KMT government eased and banned these "dangerous" statements.

The rising of *Hsiangtu* literature in the 1970s is not so much as an ideology or an identity claim as an anti-government discourse, because one of its targets is the KMT's cultural policy that limited artistic creations to serve for the purpose of nation-state. This literature debate can be seen as a turning point, in which Taiwanese intellectuals started to experience and describe the reality of life in Taiwan instead of imagining the previous virtual China, the one that the KMT regime "lost." Proposed by the younger generation intellectual in Taiwan, this signified a necessary shift from the previous "fictive"

[11] Dewei Wang and Carlos Rojas, *Writing Taiwan : a new literary history*, Asia-Pacific (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

[12]Ibid.

imagination of China to a more "concrete" cultural representation of Taiwan.

The other target of *Hsiangtu* literature was the rapid industrialization by the inclusion of global capitalism. *Hsiangtu* literature especially guided people's eyes toward the rural Taiwan and mostly in its perfect parts, its people, its customs, its scenes and its life, although there were still variations in the category. One the one hand, it may be seen as the nostalgia of these intellectuals, most of whom grew up in more rural areas of Taiwan than the biggest city Taipei. They describe their memory of the youth in texts in order to remember it when they resided in urban space. However, this does offer the critiques to the fast "development" from foreign capitals at the expense of economic exploitation of the rural life.[13] In other words, *Hsiangtu* literature questions the meaning and the practices of modernity in Taiwan and its implicit power from western imperialism.

In a fast changing history of invading, colonizing, abandoning, and recovery, Taiwanese subjectivity had been generated from its different confrontations in different socio-historical contexts. Its meaning kept changing and the naming was always in danger because the title of the island could be shifted overnight. From Han-Chinese people as Taiwanese insiders versus Japanese colonizers as outsiders, to early *Benshengren* as insiders versus *Waishengren* as outsiders, and to Taiwanese people in Taiwan as insiders versus Chinese people in China as outsiders, Taiwanese subjectivity has been articulated in its boundary, definition and meaning under the limit of political restrictions. Finally, the R.O.C. "on" Taiwan had to readjust its position and relocate itself

[13] Ming-yan Lai, *Nativism and modernity : cultural contestations in China and Taiwan under global capitalism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2008).

as the R.O.C "in" Taiwan under the pressure from both inside and out in the 1980s. It is not until the lifting of the Martial Law that Taiwanese subjectivity can be widely discussed and defined in various versions by Taiwanese people themselves.

## II. Claiming Taiwanese Identity: Political, Social, and Cultural Movements in the 1980s

### 1. Alternative Political Movements and the Lifting of Martial Law

Taiwanese identity with its ideal values of democracy, freedom, and human rights was publicly proclaimed in the "Alternative Political Movement," (*Dangwai* Movement, i.e. outside the KMT Party), since the late 1970s. Some Taiwanese intellectuals organized a political network through the Formosa Magazine in order to bring political activists together in opposition to the one political party policy of the KMT regime that banned the democratization of Taiwan. Many political activists were arrested by the KMT regime and sent into jail in 1979; this is known as the "Formosa Incident."[14] The Formosa Incident not only gained public awareness among the intellectuals but also awakened Taiwanese people to take action in obtaining the human rights and democracy that the KMT government announced but kept postponing. In 1986, many previous non-KMT politicians in prison were released and formulated the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) as an alternative political party,[15] although illegal at the time, to participate in

[14] The Formosa Incident is regarded as an important event that gathered much support from the Taiwanese people to alternative political and social movements and pushed the KMT government to release political restriction and finally lead to democracy in Taiwan.

[15] Although several small political parties were built before the DDP, they were all associated with the KMT party for the fictive image of democratic Taiwan.

legislative elections.

The formation of the DPP challenged the KMT's legitimacy to continue the Martial Law that limited civil rights. Its formulation also generated wide public responses and inspired many social gatherings for the protests of various human rights, which were also illegal at that time. Under the pressure of the people's support and by the request of a real democratic Taiwanese society, the almost forty-year Martial Law was finally terminated in 1987. This termination not only allowed multiple voices to express themselves and eventually made changes to the society, but also shifted the structure and the exclusive authority of the KMT regime. In other words, the rule that only the KMT party can be the legitimate regime of Taiwan was challenged in the following years.

1980s Taiwan was an energetic period in which multiple political and social movements were generated not only in the political arena but also on the streets. With the economic achievement accumulated from the 1970s as the foundation, the people of Taiwan asked for more political participation and for more civil rights to protect them in order to have a better life and a democratic society in Taiwan. The releasing of the Martial Law signified the end of political restrictions masked in the name of war and the political energy of the Taiwanese people burst out to challenge the KMT's previous policies. Many protests were held on the streets and public spaces that challenged the restrictions on public gatherings. Different groups of people publicly expressed their sufferings and struggled for their rights. For example, the labor movement, consumer movement, environmental movement, and feminist movement all became more visible during this time. Various social movements surrounding the concept of "human rights"

were brought out to the streets and media to gain public awareness.

The lifting of the Martial Law released the possibility of a more democratic political operation and protected the security of civil rights, especially the freedom of speech. Prior to this unbinding of martial law, the Taiwanese had all of the advanced industrial technology and economic achievement attained from foreign capital investments, however had limited space to express their opinions, especially their dissatisfaction with government policies. 1980s Taiwan, not unlike 1960s U.S.A., was in a dynamic social change with different social movements raised. Taiwanese People constructed their new identities not only in local political debates but also in the fast flow of globalization. "Home" became an important theme to explore and search for in the following decades.

**2. Home-Returning Movements and Identity Politics**

"Home" became a very heated theme in the late 1980s because it was claimed by democracy movements as one of the civil rights to be confronted with the political constriction of Martial Law. Several social movements, proposed by an alliance of both KMT and non-KMT party people, can be seen as being driven by the desire of returning "home" and by the claims of their civil rights and identity. The most important one is to allow the "Mainlanders," the newly Chinese immigrants after 1949, most of them elder soldiers, to be able to return to mainland China to visit their family, which is called "home-returning" or "home-visiting." Another back-to-home claim that happened inside Taiwan is to permit Indigenous Peoples to freely return and have access to their

ancestors' land in the mountains, which were preserved for military purposes and occupied by the government. There are also similar movements to allow Taiwanese soldiers, who were sent to battle but left in China, and political refugees who were exiled overseas to be able to return to Taiwan.

These home-returning movements were not so well-known at first except for the "Mainlander Soldiers Home Returning Movement" because it challenged the KMT regime from inside and started the cross-strait communications. The elder soldiers, most of whom were the KMT's major supporters, held a protest to express their desire to go "home", to visit their dying or dead family in China. As soon as the Martial Law was lifted, the KMT government allowed Taiwanese people to visit their families in China after almost forty-years of separation. Many soldiers, who moved to Taiwan with the KMT regime around 1949 and were forced to depart from their families, started for the first time to truly step into their journey of returning "home" in China, which they had dreamed of for many years.

Since 1988, thousands of Taiwanese people have visited and seen their families and relatives in mainland China. They were eager to "return" to their "homes" in China, because their memory of family, childhood, and the youth resided there. After thirty-eight years of separation, most of their parents had died in either the Cultural Revolution (*Wenhua Dageming*, 1966-1976) or in poverty. It was just too long for them to wait for this reunion. These soldiers could only cry and feel guilty in front of their parents' graves, especially when most of their families suffered from their relationship with the KMT in Taiwan and were punished in the political movements of the Chinese Communist Party.

These Taiwanese visitors suffered from their inability to return “home” in the past and from their failure to practice filial piety to their parents. Their “temporal” departure was forced to extend to this life-long separation in the war context, in which no one has the agency to decide his or her fates.

However, the experience of this “home” returning did not resolve their nostalgia, and, instead, it re-affirmed their diaspora status because their “home” is not their home anymore. While they returned to their hometown, they not only suffered from the passing away of their families but also from the changing of their hometown over the years. Along with the dynamic difference in scenery and the huge gap of different society and memory shook their identification of the “home” in China. Especially in the earlier stages of home visiting, the Taiwanese enjoyed better economic conditions and were often requested by their Chinese relatives to bring luxurious commodities as gifts. They often felt that their relationships with their families in China were only based on the commercial benefits rather than consanguinity. In other words, they had no chance to return to their warm and sweet “home” of their nostalgic longing because that home only existed in their memory, not in reality. Therefore, although some of them decided to permanently stay in China, some were always traveling in between the two places, and some only went for a “visit” to their “home” in China and return to their home, Taiwan.

The reflection of this kind of experience also brought out the recognition that the home is where he or she has physically located for almost forty years. While this painful experience of visiting “home” in China dissatisfied their (unfulfilled) nostalgia, it re-identifies them with the awareness that the location of the arrival, Taiwan, is their real

home, instead of the location of the departure, China. Although, prior to this home-visiting experience, many of these new immigrants in 1949 have already relocated and recognized their home and life in Taiwan, but it was not until the experience of physical contact with "home" in China that helped them reconfirm their real home in the physical location of Taiwan. As a result, the physical and psychological journey of home-returning did not fix the individual to the "home" of the departure nor eliminate the nostalgia, but clarified one's identification with the present location through tracking back.

Meanwhile, for those Taiwanese people who were Taiwan-born, visiting China is a journey of cultural root-searching and even a tour of exoticism. Educated in the KMT's schooling materials that installed the pining for China, many Taiwanese people were eager to have physical encounters with the cultural and geographic scenarios that could only be read and imagined from texts in the past. Through their searching of cultural roots in China, some of them feel amazed by the rich historical and cultural resources in spacious China, while some of them feel disappointed by the destruction of Chinese cultural practices and substances after the Cultural Revolution.

In the beginning of cross strait contacts, Taiwanese people struggled to re-locate Taiwanese subjectivity by positioning mainland China as "the other," in the exotic consumption of tourism and of mass media. For example, there were two popular TV series introduced into various places in China in 1990s Taiwan. One was "The Eight Thousands Miles under Clouds and Moon" and the other was "Searching for the Spectacles of Mainland China." Not only did they introduce the most beautiful scenes in the different places of China, they also explored exotic customs and eccentric people that

surprised their audience. In other words, these travel shows are a bizarrerie-hunting and give Taiwanese people a tourist perspective of the secret China, before they have any physical encounters.

In sum, with some pride of the economic achievement of Taiwan and with the uncertainness toward mainland China, the previous cultural and economic "center," Taiwanese people posited mainland China not as the motherland, the self, but as the imaginative enemy, the others. The experiences of visiting China did not pacify the nostalgia toward China, but they provided the reflection on this longing itself and recognized Taiwanese people as part of Chinese diaspora instead. The physical encounters with Mainland China are transformed from "returning" "home" to "visit" "home" and to visit a neighborhood country which has beautiful places and exotic folks. Taiwan, in a marginal position of ethnic Chinese world, turned itself into the center through its interpretative powers with the imagination of the exotic China.

"Indigenous Peoples' Movement" is also one of these uprising social movements. With the raising of Taiwanese consciousness and the liberation of a controlled political atmosphere, indigenous movement was brought up to confront the inequality under Han centralism. In 1984, the alliance of Indigenous Peoples was formed to argue for human rights. They revealed the discrimination of the previous naming of "*San-Di* (High Landers)" or "*Fan* (Barbarian)" and announced their official name as "*Yuan-zhu-min* (the original inhabitants)." It wasn't until the late 1990s that the Taiwanese government officially recognized and announced their new name. They allowed the people to register their indigenous names as official names, instead of changing to a Mandarin name that is

completely unrelated to their original naming systems.

Indigenous Peoples' root-searching and home-returning movements were raised by many youth who live in urban spaces, instead of their communities in the hills and in the Oceanside. In December of 1987, Indigenous peoples' Movement combined with the Anti-Nuclear Waste Environmental Movement in Lan-Yu Island. In 1988, the "Return My Land Movement" was proposed to confront the KMT's ban on entering mountains for the purpose of military security and in the name of national park preservation. The rights of self-governing and self-determination were also raised and discussed in recent years but with little progress.

**III. Debates on What is "Taiwanese" and Where is "Home" after the 2000s**

After 1987, Taiwanese consciousness was held by both the KMT party and the DDP party as their main politics with different emphases and approaches. Under the tread of the Taiwanese Localization Movement and the emphasis on Taiwanese consciousness, the history of Taiwan was rewritten to include pre-modern and multiple-colonized records from the perspective of Taiwan as a subject. Meanwhile, many local Taiwanese cultures and arts were also reevaluated and emphasized in the cultural representation of Taiwan. As a result, "Taiwanese subjectivity," a process of constructing and redefining has been interweaving with different debates. It is especially often held for political mobilization.

With the support of the DPP party, the traumatic memory of the 228 Massacre and White Terror, which were taboo in the past, were revealed in public discussions. In the statement of "transformation justice" for victims and their families, the conflict between

*Benshengren* and *Waishengren* was raised again in these political debates. In the champions of political elections, the conflicts between *Benshengren* and *Waishengren* were often raised by the DDP party to mobilize its supporters against the KMT regime.

However, as the position of self always requires a reference to the other in order to construct the boundary of subject in identity politics, the meaning of being Taiwanese has been articulated in relation to the important "others." Inside Taiwan, the discourse about *Benshengren* in opposition to *Waishengren* is violently held as a racist argument in the political debates. As Chun argues, *Benshengren* and *Waishengren* basically means insiders and outsiders from the "indigenous" Taiwanese position.[16] This political boundary position the majority group of Taiwan, the Hoklo, and its folk culture as the representatives of Taiwan. The discourse of *Benshengren* as the only qualified "Taiwanese" is in the danger of drawing the boundary to include and exclude diverse people who live in Taiwan.

After 1990s and especially after the DPP party came into power as DDP regime during 2000-2008, "Taiwanese Nationalism" was raised in its exclusive sense in relation to the Taiwanese Independent Movement. Taiwanese Nationalism constructs all Taiwanese people as having one common origin, kinship, and culture that was generated in the land of Taiwan and, for this reason, Taiwan has the legitimacy to be one independent nation-state, separate from China. While previous Chinese Nationalism raised the northern-Han culture as its center, Taiwanese Nationalism holds the southern Han culture and even claims Hoklo Centralism that takes on an essentialized position. It

[16] A. Chun, "Ethnic Identity in the Politics of the Unreal," *Taiwan in Comparative Perspective* 1(2007).

is also described as "de-sinicization," removing Chineseness, which has caused criticism in Taiwan, as Horng-Luen Wang[17] discusses. This exclusive definition, however, has failed, because the impossibility to expel Chinese culture which has been integrated and internalized as parts of cultural value and cultural capital of Taiwan.

Meanwhile, the statement of "New Taiwanese," originally announced by the president Lee, Teng-Hui in a political election champion and has been discussed and articulated in the 1990s and 2000s. The proposal of "New Taiwanese" is to recognize the contribution and their localization of "the Mainlanders," who had become easily blamed and marginalized in Hoklo-Centralism as "Taiwanese" identity. The more opened and inclusive discourse pursues a place-based consideration to claim that all residents in Taiwan are the subject of Taiwanese identity, and the so-called Mainlanders should not be left alone. These discourses after the 1990s in academia also generate more open, hybrid and anti-essentialist discourses. It is still in articulation and intends to move beyond the binary between *Benshengren* and *Waishengren* and even beyond the concept of nationality.

Along with the "new Taiwanese," the categorization of four "ethnic" groups: the Hoklo, the Hakka, Indigenous Peoples, and the Mainlanders is widely accepted and employed. It was to consider the Taiwanese within a multicultural model and posit *Waishengren* as one of four groups, instead of as outsiders. As I mentioned earlier, this categorization is not without problem because they are a political category rather than an

[17] Wang, "National culture and its discontents: The politics of heritage and language in Taiwan, 1949-2003." p807.

ethnic one. In recent years, some scholars use it to include the new south-east Asian immigrants and their families as fifth groups of the New Taiwanese, while some scholars in critical cultural studies push these discussions toward a post-nation state imaginary and on citizenship.[18] As a result, it is a continuation of the construction of Taiwanese identity and is also connected with global Chinese discourses that encourage a more critical, de-centered, and yet located perspective of "being Chinese."

[18] Cultural Studies Scholar Kuan-Hsing Chen proposed a "post-nation-state imaginary" in 1994 to go beyond nationalism and to claim a new approach of "internationalist localism."(202-210) However, in his 2010 book, he suggests a reconsideration of local histories and admits that, in the third world, nationalism is generated as anti-colonial attempt and "a total negation of nationalism is nothing but escapism."(ix) Please see Kuan-Hsing Chen, "The Imperialist Eve: The Cultural Imaginary of a Sub-Empire and Nation-State," *Taiwan: A Radical Quarterly in Social Studies* 17(1994). And see ———, *Asia as method : toward deimperialization* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

## Section Two: Staging Localized and Globalized Taiwanese Dance with Multiple Ethnicities

### I. Taiwanese Dance Society after 1970

#### 1. Professionalizing and Exporting the Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance

With the support and the encouragement of dance performances by the KMT regime, a large number of talented dancers were needed and developed, firstly, in private dance studios and later in the public school system. In the 1950s, unlike those dance professionals who moved from China in 1949 could hold positions in colleges, most Japanese-educated Taiwanese choreographers established their private dance studios to teach dance and make a living. Prior to the dance programs established in schools, major dance training classes were provided in dance studios and the students of these first-generation choreographers widely extended the business of dance studios. The prizes of Chinese Min-Zu dance competition became a kind of certification to prove that a dancer was a profession and had the ability to open her or his own dance studio, as mentioned in last section. Integrating with the business of dance competitions and the need of dance performances in many ceremonies, TV shows and films, dance studios increased dynamically in the 1970s, which witnessed the dance boom in Taiwan.

The Taiwanese version of Chinese *Min-Zu* dance was also exported to overseas Chinese communities in the battles of cultural legitimacy between the R.O.C. and the P.R.C. The collection of Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance was popularized globally from the mid-1960s to the 1970s, when overseas Chinese started to step into power with economic

achievements and were eager to learn Chinese traditional culture to proclaim their Chinese diaspora identity. They built Chinese schools to educate the second generation Chinese diaspora in order to keep their connection to their motherland. They were encouraged to devote their economic support in the process of nation-building[19] and accepted cultural resources from the R.O.C. in Taiwan, while the P.R.C. kept their door closed to the world and Taiwan was considered "authentic" China. Taiwanese dance professionals, whether educated in private studios or dance program in schools, were frequently invited to teach and perform Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance in overseas Chinese schools. As a result, the Taiwanese version of the *Min-Zu* Dance was transmitted to overseas Chinese communities in order to stage their Chineseness in "foreign" lands, the location of arrival.

The establishment of dance programs in the higher education system further contributed to the institutionalization and professionalization of dance in Taiwan. Similar to 1920s U.S.A., dance classes in higher education in Taiwan were first included in physical education programs and dance was generally recognized as an independent discipline in the 1970s. Music and Dance programs at Chinese Cultural University, the first dance program in collage in Taiwan, were conjunct with music programs in 1964. Learning from the system of American dance program, Taiwanese choreographer Yen Kao, who built up the first dance program in the Chinese Cultural University, designed curriculums and separated dances classes into several specialized topics and her design of

[19] Overseas Chinese are the major supporters of the Chinese Revolution that built the Republic of China in 1912.

dance program is followed and referenced by other later dance programs in Taiwan.

Gradually, dance programs in schools replaced the private dance studios and national dance competition to provide the certification of dance profession. The official standards of dance curriculums also revealed their definitions of dance as a profession and its boundary of which dance is regarded as "high" culture. In academic learning, most dance majors were required to learn Chinese dance history from Ancient China up to the Qing dynasty, Western ballet, modern dance history, world dance history, Laban notation, Laban movement analyses, and arts appreciation. Dance practical courses were mainly separated into four majors: Chinese dance, modern dance, ballet, and choreography. Regardless of the visibility of Indigenous Peoples' ritual performances, other folk performances, and the popularity of ballroom (social) dance, dance as a profession established its reputation on these "artistic" concert dances.

Prior to the lifting of Martial Law in 1987, there were only two professional dance companies established in Taiwan. One is the Cloud Gate Dance Theater, built in 1973 and the other is the Neoclassical Dance Company that was established by Feng-Shueh Liu in 1976. After 1987, many dance professionals established dance companies and worked on various directions. Most of them are modern dance companies and tested out the possibilities of modern dance in Taiwan, ranging from Eastern aesthetic to contact improvisation. Very few of them worked on traditional and folk dances, ballet, jazz, and flamenco, among others. Some of them intensely cooperated with theater and social movements to express local issues and voices of the marginal groups. As a result, the dance development in Taiwan has more diversity, while, at the same time, keeps its

connection with the mainstream of the West that gains their visibility in the international artistic communities.

**2. The Revolution of "Chinese" Body in Taiwan: Modern Dance in Taiwan**

In the Cold War context, with the sponsorship of the U.S.A government in the policy of "cultural diplomacy," American dance companies and artists were arranged to perform in Asia and exported American modern dance during the Cold War.[20] In the 1960s, the Alvin Ailey Dance Company, Jose Limon Dance Company, and Paul Taylor Dance Company were invited to perform in Taiwan and raised fascinating interest in American modern dance. At the same time, the Martha Graham technique was introduced and demonstrated by Chinese American choreographer Al Huang and Yen Lu Wong. Many Taiwanese dancers also studied in the United States and brought back the American mainstream dance development and techniques. Modern dance, mainly the Martha Graham system, became an icon of freedom in Taiwan due to the wide enthusiasm of American culture.

Fascinated by American modern dance, dance professionals studied in America to advance their dance techniques. Some of them stayed and became Chinese-American choreographers in the United States as Hsueh-Tung Chen did in New York. Others, like Yung-Yung Tsuai, became dancers. Some returned to Taiwan after their studies and grounded American modern dance techniques in Taiwan, such as Huai-Min Lin, Hao-Yan

[20] Please see Naima Prevots, *Dance for export : cultural diplomacy and the Cold War*, Studies in dance history (Middletown, Conn.

Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press ;

University Press of New England, 1998).

Yu, and Tina Yuan. With the introduction of American modern dance, the Martha Graham technique replaced the Japanese style of creative dance and became a major trainer in higher dance education.

The creation of the Cloud Gate in 1973, the first professional dance company in Taiwan, was supported by many intellectuals and called wide attention to modern dance. Huai-Min Lin claimed the goal of this dance company as "composed by Chinese people, choreographed by Chinese people, and danced for Chinese people." He collaborated with several Taiwanese composers and students from Chinese Culture University, where he taught dance class, to create new works. In the first two concerts in 1973 and 1974, Lin choreographed some dance pieces that were inspired from the contemporary life of Taiwan, such as "Landscapes," and from Chinese literature and Peking opera narratives, such as "Revenge of the Lonely Ghost." [21] He also invited dancers and other choreographers to create some dance in 1974, such as Shu-Gi Cheng's "Apprehension," Lee-Chen Lin's "Lift Up Your Veil, Please," and Hui-Chen Ho's "Dance of Eight Generals."[22]

Lin's and his dancers' choreographies drew their resources from the local life in Taiwan at the goal of "preserving" the disappearing Taiwanese culture. In other words, Lin reflected on the westernization and the industrialization of Taiwan and sought to research the Taiwanese local culture. For example, although Ho's "Dance of Eight

[21] 1973 and 1974 Cloud Gate Dance Concert program http://cloudgate.e-lib.nctu.edu.tw/

[22] 1973 and 1974 Cloud Gate Dance Concert program http://cloudgate.e-lib.nctu.edu.tw/

Generals" gained some debate and critics for its "locality,"[23] it was the first dance piece that incorporated Taiwanese folk performance, which was practiced in Taiwanese local religious ceremonies on the streets, into modern dance and staged in dance concert. This inspiration and integration highlights the cultural value of these folk performances and recognizes it as part of (high) arts. Also, as early as in 1976, Lin invited the Indigenous Peoples to stage their "Harvest Festival (Smatto)"[24] in the concert that was more authentic one performed by the indigenous themselves, rather than the "reformed" *Sandi Dance*.

Lin's choreographies and bodily aesthetics shifted from Chinese nationalism to Taiwanese local consciousness, dance-theater, and Eastern aesthetic over the past thirty years were well-discussed in several dance scholars' research projects.[25] Since the first evening-length piece "Tale of The White Serpent (1975)" was successfully toured in the USA and the famous piece "Legacy (1978)," which described the immigrating story of a Taiwanese Han ancestor, gained resonance and response from the wider audience in the political situation of the broken diplomacy relationship between the R.O.C. and the U.S.A., Cloud Gate had lead the mainstream and the development of dance in Taiwan

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[23] "Dances of Eight Generals" is one of the local theater performances. Local religious practices were regarded as superstitions and required to be "improved" in KMT cultural policy. This kind of evaluation is posited in the hierarchy between North Han Culture as high culture and South Han Culture as low culture, and between western Christian religion as modern and Taoist religion as backward.

[24] In 1976, Taiwanese indigenous people staged the cultural performance of "The Harvest Festival (Smatto)" in Cloud Gate Dance Concert. http://cloudgate.e-lib.nctu.edu.tw/

[25]Please see Ya-Ping Chen, "*Dance History and Cultural Politics: A Study of Contemporary Dance in Taiwan, 1930s-1997*" (New York University, 2003). And Yatin Christina Lin, "Choreographing a flexible Taiwan: Cloud Gate Dance Theatre and Taiwan's changing identity, 1973--2003" (Ph.D., University of California, Riverside, 2004).

until today and became a world-famous Taiwanese dance company.

On the other hand, Liu's Neoclassical Dance Company has also drawn her inspiration in a more authentic and autonomous ways of choreography, such as reconstructing Chinese Classic dance from script notation in Korea and Japan,[26] creating a modern dance from Chinese literature and the Laban system, and conducting ethnographic research on the indigenous rituals and ceremonies. Liu held several concerts in the late 1970s to investigate several important concepts of Laban methods, such as force, space, and weight. Her goal of creating "Chinese Modern Dance" was similar to Lin's announcement, but she moved toward a different direction with the Laban theoretical system and with Chinese classical literatures.

With the economic achievement, development, and modernization of Taiwan, the dance community is also developed in the direction of institutionalization and professionalization. With a close relationship with the USA, no matter politically, economically, or culturally, Taiwanese dancers and choreographers are largely influenced by the American mainstream modern dance and as a result, the concepts of innovative choreography as well as creations are almost exclusively defined as and referred to modern dance. Modern dance in Taiwan, along with the Could Gate Dance Theater, became an internationally famous dance company, becoming the major dance practice and called for more attention. One the other hand, the Chinese *Min-Zu* dance (of the previous fantastic version) in Taiwan decayed for its lack of authenticity and the more

[26] Liu reconstructs several dances from dance notations and historical materials into the serious "The Music and Dance of Tang Dynasty."

"authentic" Chinese dance from China was popularized in Taiwan and overseas Chinese communities, which I will discuss later. As I mentioned in the previous section, the changing international politics in the 1970s and the frequent, direct or indirect, contacts with the Real China (the P.R.C) in the 1980s awoke and pushed Taiwanese people as well as artists to reposition themselves in the geopolitical map of the globe, because Taiwan (the R.O.C.) could no longer represent China (the P.R.C.). As a result, for dance professionals who work in category of "traditional" dance, they turned their direction to seek more "original" dances from local communities in Taiwan and in China. They reconstruct and appropriate Taiwanese folk performances for artistic creation while responding to both inner political awareness and external Chinese and global market.

## II. Searching "Authenticity": Contemporary Construction of "Taiwanese" Dance

Motivated from the influence of Taiwanese localization movement and Nativism literature in the 1970s, Taiwanese "folk" performance was brought out on stage by cultural elites and artists. Dance performances are also part of articulation and narration of Taiwanese subjectivity with the on-going political debates. Anthropologic interests were raised among Taiwanese intellectuals, following the steps of international anthropologists. Many Taiwanese scholars either conducted research on the Indigenous Peoples or investigated the "folk" Han in rural Taiwan. Later, indigenous scholars, following both foreign and Taiwanese scholars' anthropology approaches, conducted research on Indigenous Peoples' communities in rural Taiwan. These ethnographic approaches, research journey, and cultural representations can be seen as an effort and a

process of constructing the self and seek the definition of Taiwanese-ness, although it is not unproblematic because these cultural representations come from the perspective of urban elites and academics.

As I discussed in a previous section, the concept of multicultural model of dividing the four "ethnic" groups of Taiwan comes out very recently as a political slogan and gains public awareness. In the rapid raising of identity politics in Taiwan after 1987, different groups announced their cultural differences in opposition to Chinese-Han centralism and later the Hoklo Hegemony (as in Taiwanese Nationalism). Dance performances often staged the cultural differences for different "ethnic" groups to celebrate and reconfirm their visibility. The meaning of Taiwanese folk dance is always a process of constructing and reconstructing. Below, I will discuss how Taiwanese choreographers construct folk dances of different "ethnic groups" as Taiwanese dance by drawing materials from ethnographic researches on the local culture of Taiwan and of China.

**1. Transforming Folk Performances of the Hoklo as Cultural Symbol of Taiwan**

Theater scholar Kun-Liang Chiu tracks the history of Taiwanese theater from late Qing Dynasty to the 1990s.[27] He focused on earlier Taiwanese theatrical performances and recognized the importance of these folk performances enacted inside and outside the theater. Before Taiwan steps into industrial society, these local theater performances provides both ritual and social functions for local communities in an agricultural society, regardless of the censorship of Japanese colonial government and later, the KMT

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[27] Kun-Liang Chiu, *Taiwan Theater and the Changes of Cultures. (Taiwan juchang yu wenhua bianqian)* (Taipei: Taiyuan, 1997).

government. Local theater performances are held outside the temple and cooperate with the ritual inside temple. These performances also provide the audience a feeling of ritual, because general people may not completely understand the complicated Taoist ritual but can appreciate the sense of divinity arising from these theater performances.[28] On the other hand, local theater is a public gathering and entertainment which is very important to local communities. Paying for local theater performance is an agreed punishment to the violator of social rules.[29] This approach can re-enforce the effects of the social contract because everyone knows who pays for it. At the same time, the audience recognizes the punishment and the rules again.

Local Taiwanese theater was oppressed by the KMT government and educated elites because of its characteristics of "folk" versus "civil," public gatherings opposed to concert format, folk religion relative against "pure" arts, and mainly speaking Hoklo dialect instead of Mandarin. Also, when Taiwanese people moved from agricultural to industrial lifestyles, their entertainment was also replaced by the mass media. As a result, these local Taiwanese theaters were not easy to maintain. Not until the 1970s, and most of the 1980s, did many educated elites start to seek local connections and review the importance of local theater and arts.[30] They reflected on previously western-oriented ideology and concerned themselves about how to preserve, renew, and combine with these folk arts. The revival of folk arts and native culture in Taiwan brings people's

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[28] Ibid..40-41

[29] Ibid..20.

[30] Ibid..206

attention again toward these Taiwanese theatrical and folk performances.

Taiwanese folk performances such as Art Arrays that are acted on the streets at local religious activities were rarely brought onto concert stage before the late 1970s. This is because they were constructed as "uncivil," "vulgar," and required to be "improved" in the KMT's cultural policy. Although several small pieces of folk performances were choreographed into the category of Chinese folk dance, these dances, with their local Taiwanese culture were evaluated as inferior and should not represent the R.O.C. However, with the upgrade of the Taiwanese Localization Movement, these folk performances regained their visibility in dance concerts first and then on the streets in the highly industrialized Taiwan society.

In addition to several modern dance creations which drew their materials from these folk performances and local topics, choreographers who worked on ethnic and folk dance perspectives also commenced to interview those elder folk artists and collect materials of these folk performance with the concern of preserving them before they were lost. Li-Hua Tsai, the artistic director of Taipei Folk Dance Company, was one of the first few choreographers who were well-known as folklore scholars and choreographers in Taiwan. She played an important role in constructing Taiwanese folk dance to meet a proper cultural representation of Taiwan, as a local difference either in the network of "greater" China, in the self-image of Taiwanese-ness, or in the mapping of a colorful globe. I will further discuss this dance company in chapter three.

With more and more Taiwanese intellectuals and scholars putting in effort to keep these folk performances alive, the Taiwanese government also shifted its cultural policy

and encouraged people to participate in these folk performances after 1987. By announcing national awards to important folk artists each year, the KMT's cultural policy intended to "upgrade" these folk arts into artistic collections on a national level, while the restoration intension does not seem to be attractive to the younger generation. It isn't until recent years that these folk theater pieces were offered space for new creations and were integrated into "folk physical education," increasing the interests of younger people. From disgraced, "low," and "folk" cultural practices to internationally promoted symbols of Taiwan, Taiwanese local theater performances have been appropriated from its religious context and reconstructed for young Taiwanese generations and for the global audiences. The popularization of these folk performances with Hoklo cultural elements were emphasized, it was also in the danger of proclaiming the Hoklo hegemony that may produce tensions with other ethnic and social groups in Taiwan.

**2. Staging Tea-Picking Women as Cultural Representation of Hakka Culture**

The meaning of its name, Hakka, meaning "guest people," signifies the nomadic history as a subgroup of the Chinese Han. The Hakka migrated from the north to reside in southern China and tried to survive by living with other ethnic groups across several provinces in China. Due to limited natural resources, Hakka often had to struggle and fight with their neighbors, mostly with the different groups of Hoklo people. The social units within the Chinese Han, no matter which subgroups, were often formulated from kinship systems within family or village bases. Different families frequently fight or cooperate, temporarily, with each other in order to protect the resources they have for

survival in the Qing dynasty. When the Han departed from mainland China to Taiwan in order to escape from poverty, the conflicts between the Hakka, Hoklo, and among different families were continued with their arrival at Taiwan. While the battles between the Han and indigenous people were numerous, the battles between Hoklo, Hakka, and among different families were also frequently raised in Taiwan before Japanese colonization.

Restricted by their later immigration to Taiwan, compared to earlier Hoklo immigrants, the Hakka failed to occupy the richer natural resources in the plain area and had to mostly reside in the hills with poor soil. With the growing tea industry in Taiwan, many Hakka lived beside tea gardens and ran tea businesses, because tea had to be grown up in cool and cloudy hills. Accordingly, to their work, their leisure activities also developed with the topic of tea, such as their well-known cultural activity, Hakka Tea-Picking Drama.

With the uprising identity politics and the renaissance of Hakka language, the theme of tea-picking as the traditional culture of Hakka is staged frequently to represent Hakka identity. The Tea-Picking dance, which was first choreographed by Shui-Fan Li as a Chinese folk dance in the 1960s, was popularized and created again with Hakka tea-picking song in Hakka festivals. The scene of the dancing is often set in tea gardens and describes the happiness of the laboring Hakka women. Performing and learning tea-picking dance is an easy way for the audiences come from both inside and outside the Hakka community to appreciate.

With different local Hakka festivals held for cultural tourism in order to improve the economy of the Hakka community and smaller towns, the tension between Hoklo and

Hakka communities with the concern about what constitutes Taiwanese-ness still exists. The Hakka struggled to voice their visibility while facing Hoklo hegemony that intends to proclaim Hokkien language as a "Taiwanese" language and Hoklo traditions as "Taiwanese" culture. The renaissance of Hakka culture relies largely on the language differences, on customs, and on the performances of tea-picking as cultural representation. Even though contemporary Hakka do not mainly work in tea garden, the joyful and hard-working tea-picking women were staged again and again as the most impressive representation of Hakka culture.

### 3. Reclaiming Authority for Indigenous Peoples' Performances

With the raising of Taiwanese Consciousness, not only the folk performance of the Han people but also Indigenous Peoples' ritual performances gained intellectuals' and artists' attention. Prior to the Indigenous Peoples' Movement, the "reformed" *San-Di* Dance was widely staged by Han dancers and indigenous dancers. Since the late 1980s, these dances incorporated more authentic materials from their original rituals with the awareness of authenticity. Yet the debate between the original ritual for indigenous communities and the choreographed performance for the audience was always in negotiations and discussions regarding the changing economic and social situations.

Formosan Aboriginal Culture Village (Nine Ethnic Groups Cultural Village) was built in 1986 in Nantou by using the archive of Japanese anthropologist, Chijiiwa Suketaro, who conducted comprehensive research on Indigenous Peoples of Taiwan culture during Japanese colonization, and with the involvements of other Taiwanese

anthropologists to do ethnographic research to gather materials for representations.[31] This theme park intended to reconstruct the authentic scenarios of the traditional life of the major nine ethnic groups of Indigenous Peoples, the way it was as not yet to be "destroyed" in the influence of urbanization under the KMT regime. According to the photos, sketches, and ethnographic records that were collected by Chijiiwa Suketaro, they built the differently styled architectures, villages, and wooden human figures with their traditional costumes which demonstrates their working and living movements, and the traditional equipments they used in the past.

Except for the visual images, Formosan Aboriginal Culture Village provided dance performances in a round open–aired theater for tourists. These indigenous dances were performed according to the different characteristics of the ritual performances of the nine ethnic groups, even though the groups of dancers are mixed from different ethnic groups. In the earlier stage, they performed the "reformed" *San-di* dance with physical interaction with tourists, such as inviting tourists to dance with them. Later, with some indigenous dance teachers, they started to choreograph some rituals or wedding activities to provide a more distinguished and authentic dance from each ethnic group. Negotiating with tourists' tastes, they had to recreate some rituals that may have appeared too slow or too boring to outsiders and transform them into a more exciting dance performance.

Meanwhile, some Taiwanese dance professionals were also opposed to the reformed *San-Di* dance and have conducted ethnographic fieldwork to collect and record the

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[31] Lih Rong Chiou, "The Representation of Taiwan's Aboriginal Architectural Heritage," *JOURNAL OF GEOGRAPHICAL SCIENCE* 60(2010). 112.

different rituals of the Indigenous Peoples since the 1970s, driven by a sense of imperialists' nostalgia for the fear that the "original" indigenous culture were "disappearing."[32] Many ritual performances were written by Laban notations, while some were in texts. Indigenous teachers were invited to teach and demonstrate the original indigenous rituals for Han and indigenous dancers, as I mentioned in earlier sections. With the reconnection to their lands and their roots in their original ancestors' place, Indigenous Peoples started to trace their history and knowledge back into these oral and physical ritual practices in order to understand who they were and where they are going. While some indigenous intellectuals worked on writing these stories in literature, others conducted research and interviews to stage these ritual performances in theater. Indigenous intellectuals were aware of the importance of representation and the struggle to take back their authority of interpreting their own indigenous culture.

Moreover, many indigenous intellectuals also participated in the self-representations of indigenous ritual performances. For example, the Formosa Aboriginal Song and Dance Troupe was constituted by Indigenous Peoples from different groups and was built in 1991 for the purpose of preserving these oral traditions from the senior member of the indigenous society with the assistance of anthropologists.[33] The first-generation members of this ensemble were mostly young urban aboriginal people who knew very little about their own ritual performances. It was through the gathering of this ensemble and ethnographic research that they conducted performances that they were

[32] R Rosado, "Imperialist Nostalgia," *Representations*, no. 26 (1989).

[33] The Formosa Aboriginal Song and Dance Troupe has been associated with anthropologist Tai-Li Hu.

able to track and understand their aboriginal communities and cultures. The Formosa Aboriginal Song and Dance Troupe staged the ritual performances from different Taiwanese Aboriginal communities and has now built up its reputation as the most authentic Taiwanese aboriginal performing group and as the representatives of Taiwan.

As a result, the power to interpret Taiwanese indigenous culture was partly handed back to Indigenous Peoples, while the anthropologist perspective of the Han and their commercial values still play an important role in the representation of Taiwanese indigenous performances. With the raising of Indigenous Peoples' consciousness, the searching for cultural roots and authority from the past to constituted the formation of indigenous identity in Taiwan. However, the visibility of cultural performances of Taiwanese indigenous people does not necessarily challenge the unequal social status of their communities. When Indigenous Peoples of Taiwan struggled to take back the authority to perform their own song and dance on stage, they had to constantly negotiate with the entertaining-oriented stereotype that intended to fix their living bodies in the past.

### 4. China as Ethnographic Object: Learning "Authentic" Chinese Dance in Cultural Exchanges

Positioned in the categories of global "national dance," Chinese dance roots its authority in its authentic and ethnographic research on the ethnic minority, its archeological research on classical court dance, and a certification system that referred from the ballet certification system. Similar to the construction of the Chinese Min-Zu dance in Taiwan, Chinese dance was supported and developed under the ideological battles of P.R.C. policy, which claimed that all art should serve for the proletariats. As a

result, it was the folk dances of the diverse ethnic minorities that were collected and presented in the first national ceremonies of P.R.C. Expelling bourgeoisie tastes, the P.R.C. criticized and censured any practices of western "high" art, especially art that was related to the U.S.A and west Europe, modern dance being one of the examples. However, with the intensive fellowship with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in the earlier stage, the P.R.C. paradoxically incorporated ballet as a "scientific" and "revolutionary" training system with Chinese dance elements to choreograph new dance for the new China. The Beijing Dance School and the Beijing Dance Academy built its dance programs in 1954 with the assistance of Russian dance professionals and with the structure of the dance education system in the Soviet Union.[34] It later employed this Russian schooling model to establish Chinese Classical dance program and Chinese Folk dance program. In other words, the construction of Chinese dance curriculums and trainings were largely influenced by Russian ballet training and its aesthetics, while its goal was to establish a new and revolutionary Chinese national dance.

The integration of ballet training in Chinese dance was mostly demonstrated in the "*Yangban Xi,*" the "Model Plays,[35] during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, when the Chinese traditional culture and western classical culture suffered wide criticisms and destructions. Both Chinese dance and (Russian) classical ballet were banned, these dance professionals and other intellectuals were sent to the countryside to re-educate. Only the eight Model Plays were allowed to perform and were encouraged to be learned by local

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[34] *Zhongguo jin xian dai dang dai wu dao fa zhan shi, 1840-1996.*, (Beijing City Ren min yin yue chu ban she, 1999).

[35] Ibid.

troupes to be displayed in every corner of China. Two of the eight Model Plays were the Chinese Ballets “The Red Woman Detachment”[36] and “The White Haired Girl.” Both of the two ballets employed Peking opera movements on upper body and ballet techniques on the lower body. Their plots, in general, narrated how the peasants suffered from the oppression of bourgeoisie class, raised class struggles with the assistance of Communist party, and gained victory and a happy life. Because of “*Yangban Xi,”* the Model Plays were imitated and repeatedly performed in all towns, big and small, of China. The standardized movements in these plays were also spread out and became familiar to mass audiences.

In the frequent contacts in the name of “cultural exchange” in the 1980s, Taiwanese dancers were attracted by the “authentic” Chinese dance from mainland China, especially by the dances of ethnic minorities. Many Taiwanese dance professionals went to China to do ethnographic research[37] and to learn the exact choreographies and techniques from Chinese dance teachers, including “*Yangban*” (i.e. modalized) movements which included the “exaggeration of facial expression and physical movements,” as theater scholar Nancy Guy suggests in her discussion on the case of Taiwanese Peking Opera troupes.[38] Taiwanese dancers brought Taiwanese economic capitals to China in exchange for the cultural property of China, the Chinese dance. Yet they also brought these

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[36] For a detail discussion on the relationship between Chinese Nationalism and“The Red Woman Detachment,” please see Tin-Ting Chang. “Communist Tulles: Chinese Modern Ballet during the Cultural Revolution” in the International Symposium: Cultural Identities/Artistic Identities from Bombay to Tokyo. (2006)

[37] They use the term *Cai-feng* in Chinese context, which literally means gather and collect the folks’ cultures.

[38] Nancy Guy. 104.

“composed” movements, trainings, and aesthetics that mixed Chinese elements with ballet techniques back into Taiwan. As a result, standardized Chinese dance performances from China replaced the previous developments of the Chinese *Min-Zu* dance in Taiwan and in the overseas Chinese communities. This transformation reconfirmed Beijing as the center of Chinese dance performance and Taiwan as the marginal space, in a model that caused Taiwanese dancers as part of Chinese diaspora to be eager to come back to the cultural “motherland” for the appreciation and appropriation of the authentic cultural practices.

The Peking Dance Academy started to establish its Chinese Dance Certification system in 1986[39] with the emerging economic development in China after its opening. It offered Chinese Dance Certification for teachers and students from the age of five to adulthood with thirteen grades. The academy provided standardized course materials for teaching and preparing graded exams. This system was not only widely operated in many cities of China, but also extended to Hong Kong, Taiwan, and other overseas Chinese communities, such as the USA and Canada. Therefore, certain “beautified” and organized versions of dances with its underlying ballet trainings were transmitted through these certification exams and establish the authority from the Peking Dance Academy as the officially standardized and “authentic” version of Chinese dance. These institutionalized “choreographies” are staged in Taiwan as a demonstration of the cultural continuity of Chinese “traditions,” regardless of the fact that most of them are transported directly from the dance studios in Beijing or in other major cities to the dance studios in Taiwan.

[39] *Zhongguo jin xian dai dang dai wu dao fa zhan shi, 1840-1996.*

## Section Three: Searching Alternative/Taiwanese Bodies in the Ma-Zu Pilgrimage

### I. Looking for an Alternative Body: Neither Western nor Chinese

#### 1. Experimental Bodies in Taiwanese Little Theater Movement

The "Taiwanese Little Theater Movement"[40] was part of the social and political movements in the late 1980s that were generated to challenge the KMT's culture policy and to struggle for alternative expressions under martial law. While the mainstream theater production was still frozen in anti-communist "spoken drama" (or modern drama) under the KMT's censorship in the late 1970s, theater scholars and actors sought different approaches of artistic creation and critical aesthetics. Taiwanese theater scholar Ming-Der Chung suggests that the Little Theater Movement generated "the radicalization of aesthetics"[41] (Chung, 136) even before the political liberation of Taiwan. In other words, the rebellion against the traditional principles of theater in the Little Theater Movement was provoked along with the changing social and political structure of Taiwan at that time.

Little Theater troupes actively participated in the protests on the streets, fought for justice, and were opposed to the sovereign. Theater Scholar Ivy I-Chu Chang discusses the close inter-relationship between Taiwanese avant-garde theater and social

[40] Mingder Chung, "The Little Theatre Movement of Taiwan (1980-1989): In search of alternative aesthetics and politics" (Ph.D., New York University, 1992).

[41] Ibid.136.

movements.[42] She draws the term “theater of action” from Taiwanese theater artist Wang Molin’s statement in a play and transforms its meaning to discuss the way theater artists employed their professions in social movements and the way social activists in various oppositional movements employed theatrical concepts to embody and visualize their claims. Tracking the numerous social and theater movements, Chang discloses that the history in which both theater artists and political activists are eager to shake previous body politics under martial law.

In the various theater experiments taken in the Experimental Theater and Avant-Garde Theater,[43] multiple-sources were drawn to revolute the previous disciplined body and explore the different possibilities of the body. The conceptualization and re-conceptualization of body was centered as the question to be investigated in theater creations. Several discourses of body were examined and experienced in order to answer the question: what is or what constitutes a Taiwanese body? For example, the first performance of Japanese Butoh in Taiwan happened in 1986 and overturned the Taiwanese people’s perceptions of body and performance. Butoh performance posted a critical inquiry of “being” to the body and to the Taiwanese audience. Later, several European avant-garde and experimental theater discourses were introduced into Taiwan. For example, Antonin Artaud’s Theater of Cruelty challenged the stereotype of “beauty,” and Jerzy Grotowski’s trainings combining the concept of community and ritual

[42] Ivy I. chu Chang, "Remapping memories and public space: The theater of action in Taiwan's opposition movement and social movements (1986-1997)" (Ph.D., New York University, 1998).

[43] From the discussions on experimental theater and avant-garde theater in Taiwan after 1990s, please see Iris Hsin-chun Tuan, *Alternative theater in Taiwan : feminist and intercultural approaches* (Youngstown, N.Y.: Cambria Press, 2007).

performance. They challenged previous valued body aesthetics, such as a Chinese characterized body and a Western bourgeoisie body. After one decade of radical exploration on potential body aesthetics, the point of starting is also the point of departing, Taiwanese theater turned inwardly to ask the important question of Taiwanese body and seek from several bodily practices of Taiwan, such as Taoist practices, local rituals, and Tai-Chi, in order to keep their journey of inquiry with critical awareness.

### 2. Eastern Body Aesthetic in Taiwan

Meanwhile, various conceptualizations of a dancing body also merged into Taiwanese dance practices. Dance professionals diversified their directions while searching for different ways of dancing, ranging from returning to fieldworks in Taiwan or in China to introducing American post-modern dance, improvisation, mediation practices, and religious inspirations. While the Cloud Gate Dance Theater announced its turning point in 1993 in the choreography of "Nine Songs," in which Martha Graham techniques with Chinese Peking opera vocabularies yielded their space to the religious fluidity of body, the Dance Forum, the second professional modern dance company in Taiwan, invited different choreographers from Hong Kong and from Taiwan created post-modern dance pieces with a combination, fusion, and collage of styles. Dancers have different choices from contact improvisation workshops, relaxation technique class, Chinese ethnic minorities dance workshops, Taiwanese drumming workshop, Tai-Chi classes other than ballet, Martha Graham techniques, and Peking opera classes. In other words, Taiwanese dance practices also generally move toward the post- and de-martialed

bodies and multiple dancing bodies are reconsidered in rehearsals and choreographies.

Taiwanese scholars have categorized certain contemporary Taiwanese choreography, which mainly employ Eastern symbols, philosophy, movements, and demonstrate mythic and religious impressions to their audiences, as the "Eastern body aesthetic." Taiwanese dance scholar Ya-Ping Chen summarizes this major direction of the "Eastern body" in Taiwanese choreographers since the late 1990s and tracks how the orientalism and self-orientalism interacts in the transitions among Europe, Japan and Taiwan.[44] Another Taiwanese literature and cultural studies scholar Chi-Hui Liu also focuses on how Taiwanese choreographers employ the images of Goddess and oriental religious icons on stage by discussing the three modern dance choreographers, Lin Huaimin, Tao Fulan and Lin Xiuwei, who transform these images to construct new representations that can be distinguished from Chinese-Han-patriarchy culture.[45] Liu argues that Taiwanese identity is represented by abjection of the symbol of China and the symbol of the West and by employing "Oriental icons" in order to construct the Taiwanese-self. Both scholars historicize the possible social and cultural contexts of the rising "Eastern body aesthetics" and reflect on the danger of identity politics and self-orientalism.

However, by tracking the history of disciplined and oppressed body under martial law Taiwan and by investigating the desire and the nostalgic callings for a more stable identity to be feeling at home for over forty years, I would rather suggest that this "Eastern research" is a reflective motion and is part of global avant-garde movement as

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[44] Please see chapter five of Ya-Ping Chen's Ph.D dissertation.

[45] Chi-Hui Liu, *Orphan, Goddess, and the Writing of the Negative: The Performance of Our Symptoms* (Taipei: Lixu Publisher, 2000).

its beginning of investigations and as its intention. The attempts to re-conceptualize the body did not solely happen in Taiwanese dance and theater practices but also could be conceived of as the awareness and the resistance toward capitalism and the post-modern condition proposed in many locations of the globe. In other words, the emphasis on Eastern spirituality and on a renewable, organic, human body in these choreographies of "Eastern body aesthetics" should be reconsidered in this matter.

Also, situating Taiwanese artists in the geopolitics between the local and the global, the seeking of an alternative body could be considered as a strategic positioning. What most Taiwanese choreographers intend to do is position Taiwan as one part of Asia. The slip from Chinese icon to Taiwanese local Goddess to Oriental icon discovers the politics of positionality that satiates Taiwanese in the global festivals and even in China as an emerging market. Either considered as the representations of Taiwanese or the expression of Asianness, these works have already been essentialized, as the opposite to western "subject," which also signifies the geopolitics of differences that Taiwanese artists need for survival and being seen.

The "Eastern body aesthetic" should be perceived as not simply self-Orientalism or self-iconized attempts but rather a nostalgic calling for an ideal body of Taiwanese people that offer Taiwanese artists both refection and positions. I will discuss the multiple ways of reading the seeking of a Taiwanese/Eastern body in details in chapters three and four in the analyses of the two dance companies. It is undeniable that this searching and its results are inseparable and interconnected with the searching for Taiwanese identity, although it is not necessarily stabilized on the moving body on stage. Before I go into

depth discussing the dances of Taiwanese choreographers in chapter three and chapter four, I will first track how the Ma-Zu belief, a local popular religion, and how its pilgrimage entered cultural discourses of Taiwanese subjectivity and became part of theater training in Taiwan.

## II. The globalization of Ma-Zu as a Cultural Symbol of Taiwan

### 1. What is Ma-Zu Belief?

Ma-Zu, the Ocean Goddess, is the most popular and important belief in Taoist religion in Taiwan. Thousands of Ma-Zu temples are built intensively all over this small island. Because Ma-Zu is the goddess who controls the ocean, people believe it is the protector of fishermen and immigrants, both of whom struggle to survive on the ocean. In the early stages of Taiwan, most immigrants were fishermen or businessmen who travelled frequently between China, Taiwan, and other nearby islands. The Ma-Zu belief was brought to Taiwan by immigrants from China and it generally became the most popular goddess who managed all natural resources such as: water, rain, soils, and trees when people started agricultural life and resided in Taiwan.

The story of Ma-Zu's transformation from a human being to a goddess was first believed as a local religion and then was officially recognized by the Qing court. Ma-Zu was, accordingly, a gifted girl who sacrificed herself in order to save her father's and brothers' lives as fishermen on the ocean. The ultimate God praises her devotion and courage, so she becomes the goddess Ma-Zu. Because "ma" means "mother" and "zu" means "ancestor," Ma-Zu has its character and figure as a family number of the believers.

Ma-Zu belief was soon spread out in the east-south coast of China where being fishermen was a major way of making a living.

Brought about by earlier Han immigrants and relocating to Taiwan, the Ma-Zu belief is widely believed and Ma-Zu temples become the community centers of fishing villages and small towns. The local Taiwanese religious practices were neither banned during Japanese colonization nor restricted during the KMT regime, but these folk religious practices generally adjusted themselves to organize gatherings without challenging the authority of any government. The popularity of Ma-Zu is mostly demonstrated in Ma-Zu's birthday ceremony in March of the lunar year. It has been a very heated folk holiday every year, on which the whole community devotes all of its food and energy to celebrating, even under Japanese inspection. There is a well-known Taiwanese saying, "Ma-Zu Crazy in March," which demonstrates the importance of Ma-Zu belief in Taiwanese folk society.

Echoing the migratory history of the Taiwanese (Han) people, Ma-Zu, the goddess, is not only the symbol of home for people who are in traveling, but also demanded to travel in itself. Its own pilgrimages transform its routes from in the ocean into on the land. Like many other religious practices in the world, the Ma-Zu belief system is also held by kinship system that requires Ma-Zu temples to hold their tours to other temples to gain their legitimacy and divine powers.[46] "Bring the Fire" constructs and maintains the kinship system of the Ma-Zu belief, in which all Ma-Zu temples connect each other as a

[46] Smaller and newer Ma-Zu temples have to regularly visit other bigger and older Ma-Zu temples. Even the oldest or the biggest have to visit other temples that are of the same status.

family networks.

### 2. Ma-Zu Belief in Constructing Taiwanese Subjectivity

Ma-Zu has been used as a cultural symbol to construct Taiwanese subjectivity and identity, especially in the post-marital law period. It is partly because that Ma-Zu belief is the most popular religious activities supported by many Taiwanese Han people and is therefore seen as the very "Taiwanese" cultural practices, while it is banned in its original place of China. The ways that it is integrated into many Taiwanese people's daily life and the intensity that it calls from people's strong attraction are all considered as an important part of Taiwanese culture. As a result, the capability to gather the masses in Ma-Zu activities and the numbers of Ma-Zu believers became an important political-religious relationship with governmental support and with the spotlight of mass media in gaining its political, economic, and social benefits.

However, the constructing of Ma-Zu as exclusively "Taiwanese" has always disturbed by the fact that it originated from China and that the oldest and highest temple in its kinship system resides in China. Although scholars and believers argue that Ma-Zu belief is a localized and indigenized religion of Taiwan, since its practices have been developed in Taiwan and its revival in China was contributed by Taiwanese capital, the Ma-Zu belief is recently held by China as a "intangible cultural property"[47] of the world. Ma-Zu belief as a Taiwanese cultural practice is hard for Taiwanese people to claim the ownership and the authority. It is undeniable that the Ma-Zu belief has a historical reality that its origin and the cultural continuity are from China, no matter how much Taiwanese

[47] Ma-Zu is entitled as an intangible cultural property of China.

nationalists claim it as a native symbol of Taiwan.

The emphasis on the Ma-Zu belief as a Taiwanese cultural symbol, rather than another popular Taoist religious belief, in Taiwan has its reason on the characteristics of Ma-Zu as a goddess that signifies a sense of mother and of home. As Partha Chatterjee argues, "the spiritual signs of femininity" are often marked and standing for the nation in the connection of women-goddess-nation.[48] Ma-Zu, a Goddess who connects female, mother, and home, provides symbolic emotional ties for Taiwanese self-consciousness. For example, it is believed as a legend that Ma-Zu suddenly appears in the air and catches a bomb thrown by and American army, saving the Taiwanese people in World War II. In this sense, Ma-Zu is a mother who takes care of and helps people survive, providing a feeling of protection and home when Taiwanese people were abandoned like orphans.

Moreover, the image of local Goddess is often employed to proclaim political arguments. It signifies the concept that motherland is here-in-Taiwan rather than there-in-China. For example, in 2007, the status of Ma-Zu was carried from Taiwan to New York to be declared for a Taiwanese position in the United Nations and to signify the status of Taiwanese independence. Also, Ma-Zu has been raised to gather the supporters for social justice in political movements. For instance, in the anti-nuclear movement of Kung-Liao, where the Taiwanese government is building the fourth nuclear factory, its local Ma-Zu, called anti-nuclear Ma-Zu, participated in most of the protests since 1986. Consequently, Ma-Zu is perceived not only as a cultural symbol but also as the representation of local

[48] Partha Chatterjee, *The nation and its fragments : Colonial and postcolonial histories* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993).131.

voices, while its narratives are differential in different political positions.

Ma-Zu pilgrimages are further popularized as important cultural festivals that bring financial benefits to its local temple and communities. In recent years, Ma-Zu pilgrimages in different locations of Taiwan intended to catch up with the successful model of cultural festivals that bring more Ma-Zu believers from other parts of Taiwan as well as bring economic contributions to the temples and to the neighborhood area. The first and most famous case is the "DaJia Ma-Zu," i.e. the Ma-Zu in the town of DaJia, has been constructed as "International Ma-Zu Cultural Festival" and built its international visibility and gained governmental support.[49] By inviting local and international performing groups to perform in the festival, DaJia Ma-Zu became the best-known and the biggest Ma-Zu event that brought a huge amount of participants, scholars, and foreign tourists as well as the intensive visibility in mass media.

Ma-Zu pilgrimage is not only established as a Taiwanese cultural symbol at national level but also contributes to gathering the consciousness and the identity of local communities in their preparation of a local Ma-Zu pilgrimage. The undertaking of Ma-Zu cultural festivals of different temples often requires the support of local folklore and religious scholars and historians to provide and construct a specific local cultural knowledge and history that can be distinguished from other Ma-Zu temples. For example,

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[49] DaJia Ma-Zu was originally the secondary level of Ma-Zu temple in Taiwan and gained its fire from BeiGang Ma-Zu temple each year. In 1986, the year before the reopening of cross-strait communication, the DaJia temple organization, illegally took a ship to Mei-Zhon temple in China and brought its fire back to Taiwan and by doing so, DaJia Ma-Zu overturned its position and gained its authority in the hierarchy of the Ma-Zu system in Taiwan. It constructs itself as the highest and biggest Ma-Zu temple in Taiwan and later enlarges its Ma-Zu pilgrimage as an international Ma-Zu Festivals that attracts religious and cultural tourists from Taiwan, China, and all over the world. For detail discussion please see Haun Chang, *Constructing MazuL Selected Papers in Mazu Cult* (Taipei: Institute of Ethnology. Academia Sinica, 2004).

the Baishatun Ma-Zu Pilgrimage that I will discuss in detail below has generally formulated its local difference and gained its visibility in Taiwan by the local cultural elites' efforts writing and recording its "invisible" history of the village. The media productions such as films further spread its local features and call outsiders' attention to this local Ma-Zu religious practice. For example, many young people from other cities and towns are aware of and therefore participate in the Beishatun Pilgrimage because of the film "Island Etude," which included several touching scenes from this pilgrimage. Accordingly, Ma-Zu pilgrimage became an intersectional point in which the local community formulated the local viewpoint, Taiwanese people proclaimed an identity, and global tourists felt attracted with it as a cultural festival.

## III. In Searching of Taiwanese Bodily Experience: the Baishatun Ma-Zu Pilgrimage and its Theater Participants

### 1. Baishatun Ma-Zu Pilgrimage

"Baishatun Ma-Zu," The Ma-Zu of Gong-Tian Temple in the Baishatun village, has a long history to visit "the Beigang Ma-Zu", an important Ma-Zu of Chao-Tien temple who holds the highest position[50] in the Ma-Zu's hierarchic system in Taiwan. It is said that the Baishatun Ma-Zu pilgrimage has been held every year since the late Qing Dynasty for more than two hundred years and has been an important event for the

[50]At first, *Beigang* Ma-Zu of Chao-Tien temple is recognized the highest level of Ma-Zu temple and is the destination of most Ma-Zu temples in Taiwan, including *DaJia* Ma-Zu. Ibid.

Baishatun residents.[51] Chao-Tien temple is located in Beigang of Yun-Lin County; while Gong-Tian Temple is located in Baishatun of Miao-Li County. The distance between the two temples is about one hundred miles which spans across four counties of middle Taiwan. The walking distance of the Baishatun Ma-Zu pilgrimage for a single trip is much more than the direct distance between the two places because of Ma-Zu's indirect routes in pilgrimage. To finishing a complete pilgrimage is to walk for a round trip.

Baishatun Ma-Zu pilgrimage is famous for its maintenance of pilgrimage tradition: a long walking journey with unpredictable routes decided by the goddess Ma-Zu. The status of Baishatun Ma-Zu is set inside a sedan chair with long stickers shouldered by four male bearers. The chair is shaking with different patterns and rhythms and is guiding its own directions, which is called "enact or perform the sedan chair (Xing-Jiao)."[52] In other words, it is not controlled by its bearers but by the Ma-Zu's power, as it is looked like and believed by people. Unlike the Ma-Zu(s) in other temples takes on similar or the same routes in their pilgrimage each year, Baishatun Ma-Zu's chair often chooses different roads and occasionally visits general people's houses and stores. The instructions and thoughts of Ma-Zu are expressed in the motions of its chair that are unforeseeable to its followers and prayers.

I would like to use the concept of "improvisation" to describe the unpredictable "actions" and "movements" guided by Baishatun Ma-Zu, as people believed. The shaking

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[51] Gong-Tian Temple is built in 1863 and it is believed that Baishatun Ma-Zu pilgrimage has been held even before the building of Gong-Tain Temple.

[52] "Xing-Jiao" means that Ma-Zu expresses its thoughts and intentions by performing different motions on its sedan chair. It is listed as the first characteristic of Baishatun Ma-Zu.

of Ma-Zu's chair lead by seemingly uncontrolled power produces a feeling of magic. For example, Ma-Zu may rush across the street away from its previous direction or suddenly stop in front of someone's house. When Ma-Zu performs these improvisations in which unsettled movements seem to spontaneously happen out of any reference and previous context, viewers generate their own interpretations and offer meanings to these movements. Followers think that Ma-Zu responds to people in need, listen to the wishes of these sincere people and help them. The story of what happened in the family or of the wishes of the poor person will later be interpreted, translated, and spread orally by the followers who saw it.[53] When Ma-Zu's performance meets the narratives that people know and hear later, their beliefs are deepened by the miracle of Ma-Zu which is proved in its improvisation.

Except for the improvisation of Ma-Zu that demonstrates its divine power to its prayers, Baishatun Ma-Zu pilgrimage is also well-known by its resistance to any human-controlled influence from political involvement and from other external powers. It is interpreted by Ma-Zu's believers that this resistance represents it as a "purer" religious experience compared to other more politicalized Ma-Zu pilgrimages in Taiwan.[54] For example, in the most famous of DaJia Ma-Zu's pilgrimage, the most important politicians and government officers[55] will show in its ritual and different local powers will fight with

[53] In my fieldwork in 2010, I heard many stories from other pilgrims in the walking about what happened in Ma-Zu's visiting and what is the background or the needs of the families to which Ma-Zu gave blessings, which I may not see myself.

[54] It is also listed as one of characteristic of Baishatun Ma-Zu.

[55] The powerful political-business relationship held by the temple organization of DaJia Ma-Zu makes it very important for politicians to show in its Ma-Zu's ceremony. For example, before the 2000 president election, all candidates were invited and participated in DajJia Ma-Zu's ceremony.

each other on the streets to influence its routes in order to “invite” Ma-Zu to their communities. Different from DaJia Ma-Zu’s pilgrimage accompanying with Mass media, gang violence, and political intervention, Baishatun Ma-Zu’s pilgrimage maintains its principle to avoid any direct connection with political issues. For example, Baishatun Ma-Zu may not stay at all and take another way passing a candidate who shows his wishes on political purposes to win the election.[56] Local Baishatun people are often proud that, in the Baishatun Ma-Zu pilgrimage, “goddess leads people, not the reverse.”[57]

As an unknown Ma-Zu pilgrimage only participated by few local people in the past, it now has become well-known with more and more outsiders joining each year. Baishatun Ma-Zu benefits from the awareness and the interests of younger generations toward the Ma-Zu belief and local communities. Local young people who grew up in this village and some regardful researchers from other places came together and organized “Baishatun Culture and History Studio”[58] to preserve local memory and promote local value in relation to Baishatun Ma-Zu by publishing journals and constructing websites. With the intention to distinguish Baishatun Ma-Zu from the successful model of DaJia Ma-Zu, local cultural-historical workers are concerned with the future direction of Gong Tian Temple Organization and Committees, those who have the physical power to operate

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[56] Although Baishatun Ma-Zu passes some people without blessing them with no reasons, its believers often becomes the interpreters to explain or produce narratives about these events. On my journey of 2010, Baishatun Ma-Zu passed several candidates in the following elections without stopping in their preset welcome tables. Later, there is saying among pilgrims that it is because these candidates only pray for their own political benefits without sincerity.

[57]“Goddess leads people, not in reverse” 2003 *Baishatun Ma-Zu Pilgrimage Journal*, ed. Xing-Fu Lin (Miao-Li: Baishatun Field Work Studio).

[58] “Baishatun Culture and History Studio” is established in 2001 and publishes the journal “Baishatun ma-Zu Pilgrimage Journal” every year since then.

temple affairs, and carefully negotiate between commercialization for promotion and maintain what it was for local value and history.[59]

As a result, with its characteristics of long walking with Ma-Zu, this pilgrimage obtains more acknowledgements by scholars, actors, choreographers and college students. With several films about Baishatun Ma-Zu published[60] and gained some visibility in television shows and mass media, more and more young people are willing to return to their hometown from cities to participate in the Ma-Zu pilgrimage to maintain their connections and to renew their memory with this place. By oral transmission and recommendation from friends, outsiders come to this village and join in the pilgrimage to search for their interests, longings, sensetivity, and ideal experiences in the surprising improvisations performed by Baishatun Ma-Zu, renewed each year. An old, traditional, "pure" Ma-Zu pilgrimage is held each year, while new interpretations, new people, and new commodities flow into it. Its meaning is changing as people walk by and time goes by.

## 2. Seeking an Alternative Body in Baishatun Ma-Zu Pilgrimage

The Baishatun Ma-Zu pilgrimage was employed as part of theater training, first, in "The Plan of Tracking Back" of U theater (1988-1993). The term "溯 (tracking back)" has its meaning of searching the root, the self and the origin in Chinese context. Largely

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[59] The official website of Baishatun Ma-Zu started to sell some commodities of Ma-Zu, such as Ma-Zu T-shit and Ma-Zu's cute and small icons. The commoditization of Ma-Zu and Ma-Zu Cultural Festival are part of "Cultural Creative Industry" that Taiwanese government currently promotes.

[60] Each Year, documentary film was produced by local cultural worker and director Tyu-Bin Luo to record the touching stories in Baishatun Ma-Zu pilgrimage. In 2006, Taiwanese film *Island Etude* narrates its plot throughout many beautiful local sceneries in the countryside of Taiwan and includes one scene of Baishatun Ma-Zu pilgrimage, which inspired many urban young people' interests in this pilgrimage.

influenced by the western theater theorist Grotowski's training methods and philosophy, Jing-Min Liu, the director of U Theater, arranged this training plan in order to redefine the Taiwanese body. In "The Plan of Tracking Back," actors widely accepted different trainings from local and folk performances in Taiwan, such as Eight Generals, from Taoist training, such as mediation, and from local religious activities, such as the Ma-Zu pilgrimage. Involving actors into ethnographic research and practices, Liu hoped U Theater could track back to the Taiwanese body and differentiate itself from the westernized body.

In his article "Pilgrimage as a Pedagogical Practice in Contemporary Taiwanese Theater- U Theater and Baishatu Ma-Tsu Pilgrimage," theater scholar Craig Quintero focuses on how U theater constructs a specific Taiwanese body. [61] His paper reviews how the history of U theater in participating Ma-Zu pilgrimage and, later, their own long walking in Taiwan is entangled with their cultural identity and with their performing aesthetics on stage. He suggests that Baishatun Pilgrimage provides an opportunity for Taiwanese theater actors to encounter a Taiwanese culture in the collective walking that is absent in urban life. Although he did not go into detail about how the psychological-physical changes of U theater members happened in the pilgrimage and how U theater members also change the interpretation of an annual religious practice, his argument points out how the U theater employs the physical involvement of pilgrimage as an experience of "self-transportation" that can generate thinking and reflection.[62]

[61] C. Quintero, "Pilgrimage As a Pedagogical Practice in Contemporary Taiwanese Theatre: U Theatre and the Baishatun Ma-tsu Pilgrimage," *TDR/The Drama Review* 46, no. 1 (2002). P139

[62] Ibid. P141

Wen-Tsui Wu, a former member of U theater and current artistic director of VanBody Theater, plays an important role in introducing the Baishatun Ma-Zu pilgrimage to theater and dance fields. She is the person who conducted ethnographic research on different possible resources of trainings and introduced Baishatun Ma-Zu pilgrimage into "The Plan of Tracking Back" of U theater at that time.[63] She had participated in this pilgrimage every year for more than fifteen years. During her stay in theater department at National Taipei University of Arts, she also led students to this pilgrimage as part of her class in actor training, which combines Grotowski's methods with her own integration of Tai-Chi and Taoist practices. Some of these students later continued this practice and even lead their friends and incoming students on this pilgrimage.[64] Her cooperation with different theater groups and dance companies allowed her to introduce the Baishatun Ma-Zu pilgrimage as part of training experiences for dancers, such as the Taipei Folk Dance Company that I will discuss in chapter three.[65]

Once an actor or dancer participates in the Baishatun Ma-Zu pilgrimage, there is a high possibility that they will return again each year by the calling of Ma-Zu.[66] The magic power of the Baishatun Ma-Zu pilgrimage generally spreads out among actors and dancers and becomes a spontaneous and important gathering for theater people each

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[63] Wen-Tsui Wu. Personal interview. June, 2010

[64] Zheng-Hua Jiang. Personal interview. August, 2010.

[65] Wu led the dancers of Taipei folk dance company to Baishatun Ma-Zu pilgrimage in 2004.

[66] Several dancers talked about the desire and the feeling as if being recalled back to the pilgrimage. Zheng-Hua Jiang. Personal interview. August, 2010.

year.[67] More and more theater artists join in this pilgrimage, while Wu Wen-Tsui sometimes had to transform her role to share her experience and to be the guide for newcomers. In this pilgrimage, some people consider it an annual renewal of energy and training for their bodies while others return for their belief and connection to Baishatun Ma-Zu, and some return for both reasons. For details about the bodily experiences and meanings in Baishatun Ma-Zu pilgrimage, I will include my participation in 2010 for further discussion.

### 3. Taking 2010 Baisgatun Ma-Zu Pilgrimage as an example

The Baishatun Ma-Zu pilgrimage took a longer time to finish in 2010 even though the walking distance is roughly similar each year.[68] It is held from the 22nd of May to the 2nd of June and the total walking round trip takes thirteen days. The important dates of pilgrimage are decided by Ma-Zu through Divination Blocks, such as the date and the time period of departure, arrival, and significant rituals. The length of the period and the dates are different each year due to Ma-Zu's decision. In 2010, Ma-Zu departed from Baishatun on the 22nd of May, arrived at Beigang on the 27th of May, departed from Beigang at midnight between the 27th and 28th, and arrived at Baishatun on the 2nd of June. The total number of days was five, which was much longer than the previous year, of which is the shortest occurred for only 33 hours for the single trip. Because the dates

[67] Many theater troupes, actors, dancers and theater students participate in this pilgrimage annually. Several active theater and dance troupes, such as U Theater, Legend Lin Dance Theater, River Bank Theater, among others, are frequently shown on this pilgrimage.

[68] On some years, Ma-Zu may decide to finish round trip within five or six days, some years may take up to two weeks.

of pilgrimage occupy two weeks this year, most people participated only one way for one week, either departing or arriving, because it is hard to have too many days off from work.[69] I chose to join in the first one-way journey from Baishatun to Beigang during the 22nd of May and 28th of May. I started my journey from the night of 21 before Ma-Zu's departure in order to catch up the beginning of Ma-Zu pilgrimage and its ritual of departure.

Upon my arrival at midnight, Baishatun became a very different place during the night of departure because of the participation by many young people, including folk performing arts troupes and those who just returned to their birthplace from other cities. I had visited two weeks earlier, and found Baishatun to be a small village resided by just a few people, most of whom were elder inhabitants. But, at the night of Ma-Zu's departure, this village was crowded with people waiting for the journey of pilgrimage. Following the religious customs, I went to Gong Tian Temple immediately to report to Ma-Zu about my arrival and participation. This is the procedure of "harness,"[70] in which the followers pray and report to Ma-Zu that he or she will be part of Ma-Zu's troop before the departure of that day. It is said that, in this sense, Ma-Zu will protect the follower or the walker away from evil spirits in the pilgrimage.[71] The "ritual to start" was held at 2 a.m., when many people have already gathered at the temple. All night, I heard this small village boiling, full of noise and energy from endless fireworks and restless people.

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[69] According to the bus arrangements, many people could only participate on a one way route. For example, I shared a bus position with another lady who would only use it for the return trip, although I did not use the seat at all because I walked the whole trip without resting on bus.

[70] Chang, *Constructing MazuL Selected Papers in Mazu Cult*.

[71].Ibid.

The major activity of the Baishatun Ma-Zu pilgrimage is the walking itself. This pilgrimage had only a few local theater performances, compared to other pilgrimages, at some important moments such as in the very beginning and in the very end of the journey. The attention in the journey is simply toward Ma-Zu, its demonstration of its magic power and the self in the walking. Walking during the day and night, the line of pilgrims has three major parts: The Head Flag and Head Incense, the Ma-Zu's edan chair, and the walkers walking in-between the two or after Ma-Zu. The everyday journey starts in the early morning, with the exact time decided by Ma-Zu the night before, temporally stops when Ma-Zu wants to stay at one place for a while, and ends our daily journey when Ma-Zu decides to reside for the night. Walking behind Ma-Zu's sedan chair, the best position to see Ma-Zu's action and magic power, my steps had to speed up and slow down immediately with the quick movements of Ma-Zu. Following Ma-Zu's rushing in-and-out on the road with its demonstrations of blessing someone in need, the seemingly simple walking posits challenges to me, a newcomer to this pilgrimage.

The purpose of the Baishatun Ma-Zu pilgrimage as well as the most important goal from religious perspective is to "Bring the Fire" from Chao-Tien temple at Beigang. As mentioned in the previous section, "bring the fire" is an exchange activity between upper and lower Ma-Zu temples to secure their relationship in the hierarchy of the Ma-Zu family system. Anthropologist and religious scholar Hsun Chang once discussed the ritual of "Bring the Fire" in Da-Jia Ma-Zu by demonstrating its ties with political hierarchy because it only allows some important people to have access to participation in this

important ritual and gain blessing from it.[72] But the ritual in Baishatun Ma-Zu allows all pilgrims to participate and share the blessing from Ma-Zu by calling everyone's name in a roll in the ritual.[73] The pilgrimage shows its loyalty to Chao-Tien temple at Beigang each year without changing its destination to Da-Jia Ma-Zu, like several other temples did. As a result, the welcoming ceremony of Baishatun Ma-Zu also becomes a big event for Beigang local people. Many Beigang residents walk in the first half trip, because this signifies that they are representatives to welcome Baishatun Ma-Zu come to Beigang.

On the 27th of May, the date of arrival to the destination, that afternoon and evening in the Chao-Tien temple at Beigang is full of a celebrating atmosphere that heats the town. Like Beigang Ma-Zu welcomes Baishatun Ma-Zu to visit it, the residents in Beigang considering themselves as hosts provide the best treatment to their guests, the pilgrims from Baishatun. The celebration at Beigang ends at midnight when Baishatun Ma-Zu departs for its return trip. Protecting "the fire" and stepping in the return direction, pilgrims follow Ma-Zu back to its temple in Baishatun. Upon the arrival of Ma-Zu, Baishatun residents also host a big celebration to welcome Ma-Zu home. Then, Baishatun Ma-Zu has to be concealed in the temple for ten days because it needs to absorb the power of "new fire". There is a ritual to reopen the temple for people to pray in its renewed power. The whole Ma-Zu pilgrimage announces its ending in the reopening.

### 4. Reviewing and Renewing the Body in the Baishatun Ma-Zu Pilgrimage

Regarding the relationship between the Baishatun Ma-Zu pilgrimage and the

[72].Ibid.

[73] Every pilgrim who reports to the temple is recorded on the calling list of the ritual. So when the priests hold the ritual, they sing through every name on the list for blessing.

research of a new Taiwanese body, this pilgrimage is a conjunction point for several seemingly opposite concepts to dialogue with each other and for reviewing and renewing one's subjectivity in a collective movement. It accumulates memory into the body and emphasizes the bodily viewpoints in memory. The involvement of the younger generation and theater artists bring different interpretations and reflections on this "traditional" religious activity. In the revisiting of the field, the (spiritual and physical) hometown, the Taiwanese body enacts in the process of remembering (re-member), assemble one's self as a whole again. Below I will discuss the interweaving of these concepts from my and other actors' experiences and interpretations.

## 4.1 Alternative Way of Being: Time, Space, and the Incomplete Transcendence

In the daily schedule of walking, standard time becomes less meaningful because participators depart from the context of daily life and enter a sacred journey of Ma-Zu. Standard time has lost its importance in the walking because the concept of time is mostly sensed by the events happened with Ma-Zu. For example, Ma-Zu departs, visits an old woman, rests in a supermarket, and so on. The exact time does not matter so much as the event we witnessed and the places we arrive at and walk by.

Also, pilgrims move between the sense of the secular time and the sense of sacred time in this pilgrimage because Ma-Zu's journey is seen as a continuity of her power in a universal sacred frame but is practiced within a secular surrounding. Ma-Zu believers interpret the magic experiences happening in the present from Ma-Zu's legend in the past, which demonstrate the belief on Ma-Zu's eternal power across time and space. But, at the same time, these sacred experiences happened with the intervention of walking, eating,

chatting, and sleeping in a daily schedule of pilgrimage.

From a broader context, a different concept of time is used in Taoist religious activities in Taiwan. All the Taoist religious activities are based on a lunar calendar, although the standard calendar is provided side-by-side for reference. For example, the important dates decided by Baishatun Ma-Zu are on the lunar calendar and then translated into standard calendar, 22nd of May. The lunar calendar in the past Taiwanese society was integrated with the need of agricultural activities to provide relative information in the past, such weather changes. Ma-Zu and other religion systems are generated from an agricultural culture in Taiwan, so they highly followed the guide of the lunar calendar, even in the modern era. Although the lunar calendar is less noticed by younger people, it still guides the religious practices in daily life such as the Ghost month and the praying time to your ancestors and is sensed by general people. As a result, the lunar calendar and the western calendar are used side by side in Taiwanese modern society.

## 4.2 Sensational body: Self-Awareness, Pain and the Site of Memory

In the seemingly endless walking without schedule, the body "talks" to you differently at every moment. Still being unfamiliar with the situation in the pilgrimage, I tested out different ways for "being" in the long walking since the first-day. While most people do not normally sense their bodily situation until their muscles are sore or painful, I paid attention to my body during the walk due to my habitus as a dancer. After walking for the first couple hours, some of my body parts started to show signs of damage, such as a sore muscle on particular parts. When the tiredness hit me, I tried to stabilize my

temple and breathe. I also tried different approaches to balance my weight, change my upper body, and rearrange the bag on my back. I do these adjustments to "dialogue with" my body, mostly by intuition, from my familiarity and knowledge about my own body.

Even though the body is situated in a better walking condition after adjustment, different tests at different moments challenge its ways of being in the pilgrimage. For example, keeping a stable breathing circulation and smaller steps with less power, I found a cycling rhythm for my body during the walk. But the rushing action of Ma-Zu's Sedan Chair always disturbed the speed that I just constructed and forced me to react and change my status immediately at the moment. Also, the tiredness that the body accumulates meets the challenge of endless-walking at the end of the day. For instance, one evening, when most of walkers expected Ma-Zu to find a place to stay the night soon since it was sunset time, Ma-Zu led us to walk from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. without any further rests. The expectation and the already tired legs made the walking after 6 p.m. an almost unendurable journey. Therefore, the body had to keep itself living at every presence without thinking of what is past and of what is the future except the walking itself.

Walking itself is a devotion to Ma-Zu. Pilgrims provide their corporeality, mind, and soul to contribute to the wholeness of the Ma-Zu pilgrimage. In this concept, the devotion of the corporeal, the embodiment of Ma-Zu's spirit, is considered as the priority. It is because walking embodies the concept of sacrifice in Ma-Zu's belief system. In reverse, the bodies in the walking also constitute the magic of Ma-Zu. Pilgrims' bodies collectively performed Ma-Zu's sacrifice and annually renewed Ma-Zu's power. In other words, without the participation of people's bodies and their effort of walking, Ma-Zu

could not be considered an efficient goddess.

Walking is a process and demanded laboring for making wishes and rendering thanks for its fulfillment. Except for regular visiting and incense offering in Ma-Zu temple, walking in the Ma-Zu pilgrimage is considered a more efficient way to make wishes and fulfill them. The strong intention to pray for the fulfillment has to be demonstrated on the step-by-step throughout the whole pilgrimage. Even though most elder people may get on the bus some time for rest, they do their best to walk as much as possible in order to express their sincerity. Walking with Ma-Zu is also an exchanged benefit for the fulfilled wish to Ma-Zu. For example, people may promise to walk in the pilgrimage for several years in hopes that their family can recover from the sickness. Walking is the labor that human being can provide to Ma-Zu in return.

Walking is not only a test to the body but also an inscription on the body. Pain is the traces. The knowledge and experience of "pain" are the most shared topic in pilgrims' community.[74] Because the long walk often produces temporal pains on walkers' feet and legs, such as blisters, scrapes, and muscle strains, these pains become an ink of sincerity and devotion to Ma-Zu. Experienced walkers actively share their knowledge of dealing with these pains to newer walkers. Many private treatments are shared from their experiences in the chats, such as how to use a needle to stab a blister without infection. Most people believe that the most useful and the best way are to pray and to ask for Ma-Zu's help. They express their piety to Ma-Zu and show their belief that people can

[74] I borrow the concept of "Pain" from Deborah Wong's lecture in 2007. She discussed the pains that caused in Taiko playing in relation to the war memory, Japanese-ness, and as a shared topic to formulate the sense of Taiko community. Deborah Wong. "Pain and the Body Politic: Taiko Players Talk about Blisters and More." Colloquium presentation given at the Department of Dance, UCR, March 6, 2007.

overcome the pain by both the help from human-being self and from the Goddess, Ma-Zu.

We can find that the corporeality becomes a main theme and main concern in the Ma-Zu pilgrimage. It does not mean that spirituality is less important; but rather the focus on spirituality must be demonstrated through and embodied on the corporeality itself. It becomes the media for connection; the connection between goddess and human being, between the old and young generations, and between one person and another. However, the tricky thing is that the emphasis on corporeality is going beyond the corporeality in order to reach the spiritual status of the sacred. The long walk in pilgrimage is the process to encounter with the corporeality, experience it, and then overcome it. While the spirituality seems to be universal from the past and the future, the corporeality always exists on the presence, at every moment.

Although the Baishatun Ma-Zu pilgrimage is considered as a "traditional" and repeated religious activity, the presented bodies are making memories and remembering at the same time. Theater participants bring their awareness and previous trainings into the field. As Wu discusses how her body finds its ways of walking on the filed years after years, she shows how the body recalls its past into its presence. However, the bodily experiences are also different each year at different bodily status and situations. As another theater actor Zheng-Hua Jiang compares the difference between her first-year experience and the journey in this year, she is aware of how the aim in mind may change the focus in walking.[75] Therefore, the body does recall its past as well as generate its presence and all together become the memory for the future, either an inspiring resource

[75] Zheng-Hua Jiang. Personal Interview. August, 2010.

for theater performance or a habit on the body for other the long walking.

### 4.3 Grounded body: Hometown, Self-Cultivation, and Individuality in the Collective

The Baishatun Ma-Zu pilgrimage is one of the long-walking pilgrimages in Taiwan, because the idol of Baishatun Ma-Zu was made as a "soft body," which, like the human body has bones and ankles.[76] In the past, Baishatun people believed that Baishatun Ma-Zu should be carried by human body due to the reason that being carried by car may hurt Ma-Zu's body.[77] Until now, Ma-Zu and its pilgrims travel only by walking becoming a tradition that Baishatun people preserve and are proud of. In the latest development of car, airplane and roads, travelling to different places in the world in a short time is not a dream anymore (for the people of highly industrialization society). In this sense, walking, a traditional way of moving from one spot to another is less and less used in daily life in Taiwan, especially when long distance is involved. The pilgrimage keeps the tradition of walking its main focus and its main value.

In modern Taiwan, the Baishatun Ma-Zu pilgrimage is the first time or the rare chance for pilgrims to ground their feet on the land of Taiwan, inch by inch, for several days. Different from the indifference of watching Taiwan through the mass media, the physical experiences offer the reflections on what is real Taiwanese life in rural and urban spaces. For example, while walking with Ma-Zu on the unknown small lanes and streets, I saw very old people with very little kids standing in front of old houses to pray to Ma-Zu. Besides feeling touched by their sincerity, I am shocked by the economic situation of

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[76] *2003 Baishatun Ma-Zu Pilgrimage Journal*.

[77] Ibid.

these villages, in which young people leave to work in big cities and their grandparents take care of their grandchildren. I knew of the situation from reading articles and reports, but the physical encounter that I experienced gave me a further understanding and rethinking. It became a living part of my personal memory and experience about Taiwan, rather than a newspaper article that passed through my mind.

In the mass media era, images are filmed, edited and spread to construct a virtual world as the "real" world that people "sense" and believe. The meanings of connection are changed from physical contact and vocal delivery to digital message and virtual spectacle. In Taiwanese media, political debates, bloody crimes, and sexual gossips are broadcasted on TV and repeated over and over. It only offers the perspective of Taipei, the capital and the biggest city of Taiwan. The viewers either feel angry and disappointed in Taiwanese society or feel enchanted and hooked to famous fashion stars and consumerism. They could also believe in the ideology of advancement and development that their mass media promotes. As a result, the voices of the rest of Taiwan are hardly heard or seen in the "media/real world" by the Taiwanese audience.

The Ma-Zu Pilgrimage, like the Lunar New Year, became the reason for Baishatun and its neighborhood people get to go home, to keep connection to their family and community, and to renew their memory of their hometown. In traditional society, Ma-Zu pilgrimage functions as a confirmation of the area that Ma-Zu's religious power covers. By walking and traveling, it affirms and reaffirms Ma-Zu's religious center and its boundaries. In modern Taiwan, the Ma-Zu pilgrimage is still a major activity of local community, but its boarders became more flexible because local people had migrated

from their original place to other places.

Walking in the pilgrimage not only provides physical experience on the land of Taiwan, but, most importantly, it also lets local people revisit their hometown and renew their memories and connections after they reside in cities. As I mentioned, the pilgrimage is a calling to people who were born in these villages and towns. While some people moved to cities for work and others may immigrate to other countries, these people came "home" from overseas in order to participate. One middle-aged man, Mr. Tsai, told me that he felt so touched because this was his first time walking through his hometown on his feet. He currently runs a business in mainland China and came back to Taiwan for the Ma-Zu pilgrimage. He thinks this is the most important activity in their hometown and walks with Ma-Zu to bring good luck to his family and his business, even though they are now all in China.

Experiencing their hometown inch-by-inch on their own feet, people refreshed their memory and energy at the place they called their "hometown." Just like Ma-Zu has to visit other bigger temples to "bring the fire" in order to renew her power, people have to go home to renew their luck and energies from Ma-Zu. The Ma-Zu pilgrimage became a tied connection between a hometown and its diasporic people. Home is not a place to remember the past and youth, but a place to generate new ideas and refreshing memory.

Pilgrims are a hegemonic community in which a collective "we" allows different "I" existences. As a group following Ma-Zu's chair, every pilgrim walked roughly in the same direction with the same movement. However, inside the groups, individuals may have their own paths surrounding, in-between and around other people. In other words,

individuals have freedom, although limited, to choose, decide, and practice. Just like the relationship between the collective and the individual memory, every pilgrim has its own connection and interpretation about the journey while he or she all posits themself in the context of the improvisations that Ma-Zu leads. This experience meets the need to feel the warmth from the sense of community, but also offers enough space for each person to have his or her action and interpretation within this group. In sum, the pilgrimage allows individuals a mental and spiritual space to have mental reflections and spiritual connections, while also positing his or herself in a community where warm support and mutual cooperation are generously provided.

## Chapter Three

## Longing for Authentic Taiwanese Dance: Taipei Folk Dance Theater and *Pilgrimage*

In this chapter, I focus on the Taipei Folk Dance Theater (TFDT), its dance productions, its process of constructing "authentic" Taiwanese dances, and its artistic approach in the larger domestic and global contexts of Taiwanese, Chinese, and world dance. I start by detailing the background of the Taipei Folk Dance Theater (TFDT) and how Li-Hua Tsai, the artistic director of TFDT, conducted ethnographic research and folklore studies on "folk culture[1]" in Taiwan to construct reliable resources for her choreographies. As the first professional folk dance company in Taiwan, TFDT based its reputation on reenacting "authentic" Taiwanese dance by transforming folk performances from religious events and ritual performances of Indigenous Peoples, into artistic productions on stage. I, then, analyze and discuss TFDT's 2004 dance production *Pilgrimage* to demonstrate how different elements of folk performances and contemporary choreographic and training methods are incorporated in this dance creation. The

1 Although, in this chapter, I use these terms "folk culture", "folk dance" and "folk arts" as used in their conventional contexts, I am aware that the term "folk" implies a division between an elite (high) culture and a folk (low) culture and, thus, is often used to dichotomize different cultures.

inter-relationship between this professional dance company and folk performing troupes shows how these "traditional" performances cannot be fixed in the past. Last, I will discuss how Tsai's research on folk dance in Taiwan has easily been adopted by different, and occasionally conflicting, nationalist discourses, revealing the paradoxes and multiplicity of unsettled Taiwanese identities. Tsai's enthusiasm for incorporating folk and ethnic materials into her work speaks to her nostalgia, and to the nationalist sentiments of her period.

## Section One: Choreographing a Collection of Taiwanese Ethnic Dances[2]

### I. The Choreographer as Ethnographer[3]: Li-Huan Tsai's (Re)search on Taiwanese Folk Performances

Li-Hua Tsai is a Taiwanese choreographer who is well known for her creation and her

[2] I must remind my readers that, although the term "folk dance" is in its English title, TFDT has created productions that more closely resemble the practice *Min-Zu*, which I discussed in chapter one. In Tsai's usage, the *Min-Zu* dances she stages may share some commonalities with the notion of "folk"or even "ethnic" art, but they can also easily be interpreted as "national", which I will discuss in detail in the final section of this chapter. The "folk dances" I discuss here are the concert dance works that borrow from the performances of different communities in agricultural societies in Taiwan and are then molded into objects of "art" appreciation on stage (rather than "folk" dances involving participatory entertainment, which is frequently the case in the U.S. context).

[3] I draw this title from Art historian Hal Foster's article, "the Artist as Ethnographer?" Foster starts his argument by responding to Benjamin's text, "The Author as Producer" to point out the danger of artists claiming ethnographic authority without self-reflection. Hall Foster, "The artist as ethnographer?," *The traffic in culture: refiguring art and anthropology* (1995)..

promotion of Taiwanese folk dance. Tsai created the Taipei Folk Dance Theater in 1988, the first professional folk dance company in Taiwan. While quite a few semi-professional folk dance troupes already existed in Taiwan, troupes which were developed alongside a flourishing of Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance promotion in the 1970s and 1980s as discussed in a previous chapter, TFDT was the first folk dance company officially registered with the government as a professional one. Along with performing her own creations, Tsai invited different choreographers to showcase new works in her company's annual productions. Exploring the past and the future of the "traditional" dance, Tsai has been successfully provoking the interest of dance professionals and influencing the direction and the construction of contemporary Taiwanese folk dance.

Tsai began her career in the 1960s and, like Huai-Min Lin, are the post-war second-generation Taiwanese choreographers.. While majoring in physical education at the National Taiwan Normal University, Tsai began learning dance from Feng-Shueh Liu, a Taiwanese pioneer choreographer, and shifted the focus of her career from physical education to dance. As a student of Liu, Tsai mainly practiced German- and Japanese-influenced (rather than American) modern dance styles and was very attracted to modern dance in her youth, like many other dancers of her generation.

Following her teacher's example of choreographer as researcher and of her ethnographic studies on the Indigenous peoples of Taiwan, Tsai first conducted ethnographic research with ethnomusicologists and other folklore scholars to "collect and document" the songs and dances of the ritual performances of Taiwanese Indigenous peoples in the 1960s[4]. Since the late 1970s, she has shifted her focus to Taiwanese folk performances, often enacted in local religious ceremonies, and on testing ways to choreograph them into dance performances on stage. In the late 1980s and 1990s, she went to China and conducted research on the performances of "ethnic minorities" in China. She is one of the first few Taiwanese choreographers who bridged the communications gap about dance between China and Taiwan, playing a leading role in these cross-strait cultural exchanges[5] after the dissolution of martial law. In more recent years, she has investigated religious literature and participated in temple practices in order to create "religious dance," an artistic direction I will discuss later.

[4] Working with the famous ethnomusicologist Chang-Hui Xu and the folklore scholar Ying-Zhou Xu, Tsai was responsible for documenting the dances in these ritual performances of Indigenous Peoples. They were invited by the Taiwanese government to organize a state-funded Indigenous Performing troupe to tour in Europe. Li-HuanTsai. Personal Interview. August, 2010

[5] As I mentioned in Chapter two, these so-called "culture exchanges" mostly flow in a single direction rather than a mutual, exchange. In most cases, Taiwanese dancers brought Taiwanese economic capital to China in order to bring Chinese dance trainings, choreographies and repertoires back to Taiwan. It was not until recently (after China started to develop modern dance) that Taiwanese modern choreographers and dancers were invited to China to teach, perform, and gives lecture.

Analyzing the serious study Tsai applied to her creations, I argue that she relies heavily on ethnographic approaches to present these "traditional" and "cultural" materials in her choreographies of Taiwanese folk dances. Tsai puts most of her energy into recording Taiwanese folk performances and creating Taiwanese folk dances on stage because she felt these dances could "disappear" with the country's growing urbanization and industrialization. As a result, a sense of "restorative nostalgia,[6]" in Boym's words, motivates her early search for and research on Taiwanese folk performances, (although this nostalgia would eventually be sidetracked to allow more space for creation in later years). Recalling her childhood life in Tainan, a city in the south Taiwan, Tsai explains that she enjoyed watching folk performances on the streets and in local religious ceremonies held in the piazzas of temples, where many people in the community gathered. These folk performances were mostly performed by semi-professional troupes, which were frequently organized only for particular ceremonies. These ceremonies were the major source of entertainment in agricultural and pre-industrial society, when television was not yet a basic household item for every family in Taiwan.

Tsai not only collected archival materials, but also learned and recorded movements

[6] Sventlana Boym. *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York : Basic Books, c2001.

from these almost-forgotten older artists. As mentioned in the Chapter One, these Taoist or folk religions' public gatherings, as well as the folk performances that accompanied them held on the streets, had been seen with contempt and suppressed by the KMT government under cultural policies seeking the "improvement of good virtue and morality" in the 1960s. Suffering from the perception of being uncivilized and vulgar, and with fewer and fewer chances to perform, professional and amateur performers either abandoned their careers or worked until retirement without any young people to whom they might transmit their crafts. Tsai searched for and interviewed these elder artists to keep their "dying" art alive; very few young people wanted to learn and preserve these "obsolete" arts. She learned the actual steps and sequences of these dances and put them into archives by writing dance notes and videotaping them for preservation in order to pass them on to the next generation.

Not simply as an ethnographer but also as a dancer, Tsai uses her body as a medium of transmission. As an ethnographer, Tsai collected visual and physical materials, conducted interviews, transformed the dancing body into text, and videotaped her performances. As a dancer, she took classes with these elder artists and spent time with teachers to learn the qualities and hidden rules of the performances, and practiced and rehearsed them. In other words, the choreographer as ethnographer uses multiple ways of

learning, in which her body is the bearer, the laborer, and the producer of knowledge. As dance scholar Diana Taylor argues, performance, as embodied knowledge, stores, transmits, visualizes and creates cultural memory in the Americas[7], and similarly, Tsai's approach to studying dance incorporates both the archival memory and the repertoire in transmitting the memory of elder Taiwanese people into the artistic experiences for a generation of younger audiences.

However, Tsai's approaches as both ethnographer and choreographer reveal her reliance on ethnographic authority without questioning it or reflecting on her own position, a concern Hal Foster raises in his article "The Artists as Ethnographers"[8]. Foster uses the example of the Negritude movement to discuss how it became associated with primitivism to explore the "cultural other" for the sake of "a ritual of self-othering", in which "the project of 'ethnographic self-fashioning' becomes the practices of philosophical narcissism."(Hal Foster, 303-304) Although the folk performances that Tsai learned are part of her childhood memory and although she may still identify herself as a member of "the folk", Tsai, as part of the cultural elite in the city, still occupies a position of authority

[7] Diana Taylor. *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. 2003

[8] Foster, "The artist as ethnographer?.".

that allows her to research the "folk", to project her idealized "folk" culture onto her research, and to stage it in a way that offers her cultural, economic and political capital in artistic fields.

From this tracing of Tsai's role as choreographer and ethnographer, I argue that her principal concern in dance creation is to represent and choreograph these "traditional" or "folk" materials using research as her source for "authenticity." Choreographing "traditional" dance means relying on a traceable origin in order to claim its cultural continuity and to contextualize its performance. While her longing for the community-based folk performances of her childhood leads her to work on constructing Taiwanese folk dances, her nostalgia for an ideal and authentic cultural performance of Taiwan may only be fruitful for artistic creations while ignoring the oppressed "other."

## II. The Establishment of Taipei Folk Dance Theater

### 1. Tsai's Choreography prior to 1988

Like other choreographers in Taiwan in the 1970s, Tsai was encouraged by the government to present and teach Chinese *Min-Zu* dance for national ceremonies in Taiwan and to tour to overseas Chinese communities, even though her previous training was

mostly in modern dance. Tsai started her career as a dance and physical education professor in Shih Chien Junior college. In a 1977 visit to Sejong University in Korea, she choreographed and staged a revised version of a Taiwanese Indigenous performance, "Pas-Ta'ai (The Ritual to the Short People)", a sacred and very important ritual conducted by the Saisiyat people every year[9]. She drew inspiration and materials for this piece from her previous research but mostly from her own imagination, as she herself has reflectively acknowledged[10]. Later, on her 1979 tour of Europe, she re-choreographed the "Ba-Yi Dance (Eight dancers in Eight Rows dance)", an ancient court dance. This dance is based on a dance-ritual performed in front of the Confucius temple every year. Straying from her modern dance training and from her choreographies of Chinese Min-Zu dance in the 1960s, Tsai turned her focus towards traditional and ritual performances found in local Taiwan.

Tsai was invited to be the artistic director of the Chinese Youth Goodwill Mission[11] in

[9] For detail information about "The Ritual to the Short People", please see Taiwanese anthropologist Tai-Li Hu's book.Tai-Li Hu, *Cultural Performances and Taiwan Aborigines* (Taipei: Lain-Jing, 2003).. Also see her ethnographic film "Songs of Pasta'ay (Ta'ay: The Legendary Little People)" 58 min. Watertown, MA: Documentary Educational Resources, 1989.

[10] Tsai explained that she was too young at that time and, in fact, choreographed a modern dance creation rather than a more authentic Taiwanese Indigenous performance that might try to adhere to the "original" ritual in the field. Li-HuanTsai. Personal Interview 2. April, 2011

[11] The Chinese Youth Goodwill Mission was an annually touring group that was organized by the semi-official organization China Youth Anti-Communist National Salvation Corps. Each year, they auditioned talented college students from different universities to form a new group of performers. The selected students had to attend training and rehearsals at winter and summer camps, and had to pass the exams to be considered formal members. As formal members, student performers had the opportunity to

the late 1980s. This student touring group was organized for the purpose of cultural diplomacy for the R.O.C. in Taiwan, because "cultural" performances were often considered less political and less conducive to conflict than other forms of diplomacy. Tsai directed the Chinese Goodwill Mission at a time when a shift from an emphasis on "Chinese" to "Taiwanese" artistic direction was needed. As I explained in the previous chapter, the opening up of China not only threatened the legitimacy of the R.O.C. in Taiwan but also reduced Taiwan's authority to represent "Chinese" culture. In the 1980s, the Chinese Goodwill Mission had to distinguish itself from China to present the existence of the R.O.C. regime in Taiwan. Accordingly, Tsai started to choreograph several important pieces that emphasized Taiwanese folk culture, such as Art Arrays in folk religious activities, which she had previously researched. Her experience in creating Taiwanese folk performances at the Chinese Goodwill Mission later encouraged her to found her own folk dance company.

During her direction of the Youth Goodwill Mission, Tsai invited several choreographers to create new works for the company. One of them was Lee-Chen Lin, the

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perform abroad with all their expenses paid by the government, which was a great chance when foreign travel was expensive and often limited. In the evening-length shows they presented on tour, most pieces presented were dances, while some were solo performances of Chinese opera, calligraphy writing, and traditional instrument playing. For more discussion on the Chinese Youth Goodwill Mission, please see Kuang-Yu Cheng's dissertation.

creator and director of Legend Lin Dance Theater, who is the other focus of this dissertation and will be discussed in chapter four. Tsai clearly distinguishes the differences between herself and Lin in their approaches to "traditional" Taiwanese folk performing arts[12]. Tsai considers her main objective to be about including these dying performances into theater performances for preservation, while she encourages Lee-Chen Lin to create new choreography by incorporating these folk arts in innovative ways.

**2. The First Professional Folk Dance Company in Taiwan**

Taipei Folk Dance Theater was founded due to the success of the evening-length performance, "A Night of Folk Arts," which had been running for almost a year in 1988. Proposed and supported by the Council for Cultural Affairs of Taiwan, "A Night of Folk Arts" was designed as a "traditional" cultural show performed twice a week in a concert hall in Taipei City for foreign tourists[13]. Tsai was invited to direct and produce this show due to her previous experience at the Chinese Goodwill Mission. She hired dancers to rehearse and perform on a regular basis and also invited several choreographers to work with the dancers in the studio space provided by the government.

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[12] Lan-Lan Mo. "The Theatre Performance of Metempsychosis Phantasma: The Analysis of the Footwork Aesthetics of the Legend Lin Dance Theater." MA thesis. Taiwan University of Arts. 2009.

[13] Li-HuanTsai. Personal Interview. August, 2010.

By focusing on “Folk Arts”, the government expected this show to highlight aspects of local Taiwanese culture. However, in terms of demonstrating the dance “tradition” of Taiwan, it was difficult for the Taiwanese to claim ownership over certain cultural practices that either had their origins in China or were recreated by the imagination of Taiwanese choreographers, such as the “Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance” that I discussed in chapter one. In order to construct a program that could represent multiple aspects of Taiwanese culture, Tsai invited both Taiwanese choreographers and Hong Kong-based Chinese choreographers to participate. The program of “A Night of Folk Arts” included Chinese classical dances such as the *Feather Fan Dance*, Chinese folk dances like the *Flower Drum Lantern*, and Taiwanese folk Art Arrays such as the *Jump Drum Array* and the ritual performance of the A-Mei people *Harvest Festival*[14]. Although this selection seemingly shows continuity between “A Night of Folk Arts” and the earlier development of Chinese Min-Zu Dance, their difference is evident in Tsai’s emphasis on authenticity. Her arrangements either come from more “authentic” creators, such as Chinese folk dance taught by a China-trained Hong-Kong choreographers, or from a more “authentic”

[14] Li-Huan Tsai, "Twenty Years Taipei Folk Dance Theater," *Traditional Arts Bimonthly Magazine* 69(2007).P104-107

resources, such as from her own ethnographic research. In other words, the performances Tsai staged are created with a careful eye on some traceable resource more so than on fabrications of imaginations.

The Taipei Folk Dance Theater is the first "professional" dance company to focus on folk dance in Taiwan, which means that it regularly produces shows performed by professional dancers. After almost seventy showings of "A Night of Folk Arts," the project came to an end. Prompted by the enthusiastic responses from audiences and government officials for this show, the Taipei Folk Dance Theater was built by Li-Hua Tsai to maintain these well-trained dancers and to prepare for international tours. Prior to the TFDT, many amateur "traditional" dance companies existed in Taiwan, which were founded in the heyday of Chinese Min-Zu dance, but none of them qualified to register as "professional" dance companies like modern dance companies in Taiwan. As a result, TFDT is significant in that it offers dancers the possibility of having a professional career in "traditional" and "folk dance" and, meanwhile, it highlights that "traditional" choreography can, like professional modern dance companies, produce annual shows. Tsai's organization was influential both in promoting the concept of Taiwanese folk dance and in fostering professional dancers who performed folk dance in the context of Taiwan at the time.

## III. Staging "Folkness" of Taiwan: Authenticity, Representation, and Cultural Legitimacy

The dance creations of TFDT can be separated into the five main categories[15]: Taiwanese Folk Dance, Indigenous Peoples' Dances of Taiwan, Chinese Dance, Religious Dance, and New Ethnic Aesthetics[16]. Taiwanese Folk Dance refers to the folk performances of the southern Han people in Taiwan, especially those of the Hoklo. This category includes most of Tsai's famous dances that were transformed from Art Arrays and entertaining parades on the street in the agricultural society of Taiwan to folk dances on stage. Indigenous Peoples' Dances refers to performances based on Aboriginal ritual performances in Taiwan, which mostly come from Tsai's pervious ethnographic research and are sometimes taught by invited Indigenous teachers. Chinese Dance refers to both Chinese traditional dance and the folk dances of the ethnic minorities in China. These dances are either taught by invited dance teachers from China or are imported from China by Tsai and other TFDT's principal dancers who have studied there. Religious Dance

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[15] I draw this categorization from TFDT's website (http://www.tdance.org.tw/) and from the introduction notes in their programs.

[16] I have chosen to translate the term "*xin min zu feng*" into English as "New Ethnic Aesthetic," however, it could be also translated as "New Ethnic Style" or "New Theatrical Ethnic Dance".

refers to those dances created from expressions of Taoist and Buddhist religious beauty and philosophy. The dances of the "New Ethnic Aesthetic" refer to a more contemporary version of ethnic dance creations that integrate modern dance techniques and frame their subjects within contemporary issues.

The most praised Taiwanese folk dance piece as well as the premier repertoire of the TFDT is Tsai's *Homage to Gods*, a work of choreography that combines various Art Arrays and entertaining parades that are composed of colorful scenes and the exciting atmosphere of temple culture in Taiwan. As I discussed in chapter two, in the 1980s with the development of an awareness of Taiwanese history and local culture these folk performances became seen as part of the traditional culture of the Hoklo group, because they had been practiced in local religious events for decades in Taiwan. Due to the dominance of the Hoklo majority in Taiwan, these Art Arrays were chosen and crafted in order to reflect "Taiwanese" performance, such that sometimes certain Hoklo culture is considered equal to, or even replaces the concept of "Taiwanese" culture[17]. Tsai's *Homage*

[17] As I explained in chapter two, from perspective of the Hoklo majority, "Taiwanese spoken language or dialect" often means "the Hokkien". By the same token, from a more extreme Hoklo centralism, the term "Taiwanese people" may exclusively mean "Hoklo people" and often ignore other sub-groups of Taiwan, such as the Hakka group and Indigenous Peoples. This kind of usage is particularly used to exclude the Mainlanders, the later Chinese immigrants from China after 1949. For further discussion of the four sub-groups as political categorization instead of ethnic one, please see chapter two.

*to Gods* has been the most welcomed dance performance of TFDT and widely toured inside and outside Taiwan.

Another part of Tsai's famous repertoire from her early career as a choreographer consists of the Indigenous Peoples' dances of Taiwan, which has however been staged less and less often in recent years. The Indigenous Peoples' dances have been seen as the most "native" cultural representation of Taiwan and are 'freely" staged by both Han and Indigenous choreographers with their own interpretations and choreographing. With the raising of Indigenous awareness, Tsai, as a Han choreographer, generally recognizes her lack of the authority to represent Indigenous culture of Taiwan. I will first discuss how choreographing a Taiwanese folk dance is a process of transformation, which starts with consulting "authentic" resources and then preparing the dancers to translate these "raw" materials into a polished piece for theater audiences. After discussing the incomplete transformation of"folk" qualities on stage, I will discuss the issues of authorship in Tsai's staging of Indigenous People's dances.

Mastering the different body aesthetic of folk performances is a challenge for the dancers of the TFDT. Most folk performances of Art Arrays or of the Indigenous peoples' rituals require loose, low and heavy qualities in the moving body and often utilize

moments –of uncontrolled energy where individuals will improvise in between set moments of patterned movement. In effect, the “folkness” quality of these dances is mostly embodied in “uncontrolled” energies as well as in the improvised behaviors that can respond to their performing situations. These Taiwanese dancers’ previous training is mostly in ballet, modern dance, Peking Opera movements, and Chinese martial arts, all of which ask practitioners to control their energies, to clearly articulate their motions, and most importantly, to straighten their bodies in order to be seen well on stage. In other words, these distinctive ways of moving the body, are in conflict with “folk” performance style in terms of their use of weight, alignment, energy, and overall bodily aesthetic.

However, because Tsai intends to stage these folk dances in theaters, her choreographies must combine “folk” styles with the tastes of contemporary theater audiences; her dancers must incorporate qualities of “folkness” into a theatrically “beautified” version of dancing bodies. Although folk artists are often invited to teach the dancers the movements and to help them interpret folk performances on stage, a certain amount of time is needed to allow the dancers to accumulate these practices for performing. Examining the rehearsal schedule of TFDT, the dancers have regular classes in Chinese dance, ballet and Tai-Chi on the weekends and only start rehearsing intensively and

practicing the techniques specific to the style they will be utilizing about three months before their production opens. In other words, except for some principal and older dancers who have been trained in the folk repertoire for a long time, the newer generation is not generally as familiar with the qualities of these performances. As a result, only some of the movement, energy, spirit, and other elements of these "original" performance are embodied on stage.

Tsai's efforts to claim the authenticity of over these folk performances also show the tensions that surround issues of ownership in so-called "traditional" performances, especially those practices that emphasize the cultural continuity and transmissions of the form from one generation to the next. Tsai rarely lists the names of the elder folk artists from which she borrows material to create her works as she recomposes and reorganizes their movement into her "own" choreography. However, she sometimes respectfully describes these artists as counselors, teachers, and artistic collaborators in her programs[18]. She also regularly invites these folk performers to offer workshops and classes for her dancers prior to her rehearsals. In recent years, Tsai has written about the influence of these

[18] Tsai puts some important elder folk artists' names in the programs, especially in the explanation of the history of certain folk performances Li-HuanTsai. Personal Interview 2. April, 2011

artists in her promotion of Taiwanese folk dance. For example, she presented a paper discussing the importance of traditional folk recitals and brought the elder artists A-Bin Huang to perform at the conference of the Taiwan Society of Dance Research in 2003[19]. She has tried to honor these elder folk artists and to raise awareness of their performances outside the dance studio.

However, Tsai's claims over the choreography she presents become more complicated when examining her "Indigenous performances". She constructs these works from ethnographic research and from consultations with Indigenous professionals, yet she has no kinship and no long-term cultural connections with Indigenous peoples of Taiwan, which occasionally puts the legitimacy of her cultural appropriation into question. In her early years of interpreting these dances, Tsai was unaware of the issue of ownership and choreographed directly from her ethnographic fieldnotes and from other scholars' research. Tsai credits most of the Indigenous peoples' dances that she choreographed to their villages or to their ethnic groups, instead of to the specific people that she learned these dance from.

Recently, however, she invited the Indigenous choreographer Ching-Mei Lin, who

[19] Li-Huan Tsai. "A Research on Drum Dance: Huang A-Bin." Taiwan Dance Society Annual Conferene. Novenber, 2003. [unpublished]

belongs to the Puyuma people, to choreograph the *Puyuma Annual Festival.* Tsai also invited ethnomusicologist Ming-Li Kuo[20] to be a consultant for her new creations on Indigenous performances. In other words, she hires these cultural "insiders" to assist the dancers, most of whom are cultural "outsiders," to perform Indigenous People's dances on stage.

The founding of the Formosa Aboriginal Song and Dance Troupe— the first professional Indigenous performing arts group in Taiwan that is organized exclusively by Indigenous peoples from different communities and ethnic groups— challenges the authority of Han choreographers and dancers to represent Indigenous performances. There has been a debate in the Taiwanese dance field in recent years as to whether or not "outsiders," i.e., Han choreographers and dancers, should interpret and practice Indigenous ritual performances on stage— a debate especially promulgated by Indigenous scholars and researchers[21]. As part of multiculturalism and identity politics in Taiwan, Indigenous students have been encouraged to practice Indigenous dances in schools, participate in

[20] Ming-Li Kuo is a Han ethnomusicologist who has married a woman of the Taou people and has spent most of his life in Indigenous communities of Taiwan.

[21] Tsai was confronted and questioned by an Indigenous graduate student about her research on and staging of Indigenous Peoples' performances at the 2005 annual Conference of Dance Research Society of Taiwan, in which I was also a presenter in other panel.

dance competitions, and perform these dances in official and national ceremonies. The issues of kinship and of community connections are at the center of the ownership debates over these practices.

While it is often argued that an "outsider" neither understands the ritual meanings nor exhibits the correct quality and energy in Indigenous performances, few discussions focus on how an "insider's" knowledge is delivered and expressed to his or her students. For example, dance majors students (most are Han people and some may be Indigenous peoples) in college may take a semester to learn "authentic" ritual performance from Indigenous teachers as a way to understand different Indigenous cultures of Taiwan, and may perform these dances in an annual concert on stage. Some choreographers and students learn their technique from repertoires recorded by previous (Han) anthropologists and transmitted by (Han) dance teachers, and stage it with the assistance of an Indigenous teacher or scholar as a consultant. The passing on of this cultural knowledge has a long history of crossing the boundaries of Indigenous communities and of participating in Han dancers' representations of Indigenous people in Taiwan.

Due to the debates over Indigenous copyrights[22] and Tsai's lack of authority to

[22] "The Indigenous Peoples Intellectual Property Act" of Taiwan was passed in 2007. However, the details of

represent the culture of “the others”, Tsai’s Indigenous dance creations have been staged less and less often. She stages her most famous folk pieces, those belonging to the Han people, while creating new works in a more contemporary and modern style with a particular shift in her focus after 2000 towards religious dance.. However, Tsai suggests that her early ethnographic records in the island of Lan-Yu in the 1970s, before the rise of the Taiwanese Indigenous Peoples’ Movement in the late 1980s, “preserved” the details of traditional ritual performances that even local people nowadays do not know or practice[23]. In other words, Tsai understands the need for Indigenous Peoples to claim ownership of their ritual performances, but she also emphasizes with the efforts of early ethnographers, and believes in the value of their attempts to research and “preserve” Taiwanese Indigenous People’s traditional culture so it would not be erased.

It is easy to criticize Tsai by arguing that she holds a conservative attitude, wanting to

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the regulations, the administration processes for claiming property rights, and applications for the agreement of Indigenous communities are still ambiguous and under examination. Intellectual property rights of Taiwanese aboriginal groups first became a major international issue when Indigenous singer of Amei group, Ying-Nan Kuo filed an international lawsuit in 1996. His and his wife’s singing of a traditional Amei "Jubilant Drinking Song" was recorded illegally during their international tour of Europe in 1988. Later, their singing was sampled and mixed into the famous song “Return to Innocence” by the group Enigma, and was chosen as the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games closing song and popularized throughout the world. For further discussion, please see Timothy D. Taylor. “A Riddle Wrapped in a Mystery: Transitional Music Sampling and Enigma's "Return to Innocence." Lysloff, René T. A. and Gay, Leslie C., ed. 2003. *Music and Technoculture.* Wesleyan University Press. Also see Chih-Chieh Yang. “A Comparative Study of the Models Employed to Protect Indigenous Traditional Cultural Expressions.” *Asian-Pacific Law & Policy journal*. 2008. Vol. 11:2 P50-84.

[23] Li-HuanTsai. Personal Interview. August, 2010.

fix these living performing arts, that she wants to store them in the archives because she wishes to record them, preserve them and transfer them into her repertoires on stage. However, it is also worth noting that she was one of the first choreographers to raise public awareness of these “dying” (by her definition) folk arts when they had been almost eliminated by the rapid expansion of mass media entertainment and by the modernization of Taiwan. Even though it is arguable that Tsai’s work was akin to “salvage anthropology” in the beginning of her Taiwanese folk dance project, she has adopted several approaches to allow some space for creativity and innovation in the staging of these folk performances. In other words, Tsai takes both preservation and creation, both the past and the future of these living folk performances into consideration when creating her work. The process of researching and searching for possible ways to keep these folk arts alive is clear in the multiple artistic directions held by the Taipei Folk Dance Theater. Constructing Taiwanese folk dance as the prominent feature of this professional dance company, Tsai puts her efforts not only into preserving the old but into creating the new from them.

## Section Two *Pilgrimage* (2004): Intersection, Summation, and Hybridity in Motion

In this section, I will discuss in detail Tsai's *Pilgrimage*, staged in 2004 in Taiwan, in order to investigate her nostalgia for ideal religious experiences and for the humanistic concerns in folk culture. This discussion will also investigate the ways Tsai's longing is mixed with her interest in folklore, religious beliefs, female spirituality, and the barriers of life. This production not only demonstrates continuity from her previous work on folk dance creation, but is also an enactment of producing courage and power for both choreographer and dancers in praying to the goddess, Ma-Zu. Although this performance is conceived as a folk dance-drama and "religious dance" according to Tsai's definition, I argue that *Pilgrimage* also shifts Tsai's artistic direction away from the intention to "represent" "folk" ritual performance on stage and toward a creative integration that responds to contemporary practices in the local daily life of Taiwan.

### I. The Dance Drama *Pilgrimage* (2004)

In general, Li-Hua Tsai seems to have obvious shifted her chorographic direction after 2000 to focus on the expressions of religious experiences. Her interest in religious themes however van be tracked to 1995, when Tsai was invited by the Fo-Huang-Shan Monastery to choreograph a work about Buddhism, *Buddhist Chants*, in which she combined Hand

Gestures (Mudras) and the image of the Buddhist God Guan-Yin with ethnic dance movements. Her work was well received by Buddhist communities in Taiwan. In 2000, Tsai created another Buddhist dance drama, *The Obsession of Mandala*, as an investigation of the "New Ethnic Aesthetic," and combined Buddhist and Taoist religious philosophies. In 2004, Tsai continued with her exploration of religious themes and created *Pilgrimage*—a religious dance but one that also refers to the "folk" and a connection with real human life instead of simply presenting the supernatural world as she had done in her previous religious dances.

*Pilgrimage* is a production that brings Tsai's Taiwanese folk performances into their local religious context, namely, a Ma-Zu pilgrimage. In the program, Tsai states that the idea of choreographing a piece about the Ma-Zu belief started during a conversation with religious Folklore scholar Fong-Mao Li in a meeting at the Center for Traditional Arts in Taiwan. Ove the course of their conversation, Tsai became interested in the pilgrimage culture that is "a dynamic journey of both mind and body"[24]. Fong-Mao Li was invited to give lectures at Tsai's rehearsals in order to familiarize the dancers with Taoist religious culture. Tsai often consulted Li in order to learn from his professional knowledge about

[24] The program note of *Pilgrimage*.

Taoist rituals and to thus present more accurately "authentic" choreography.

The structure of *Pilgrimage* flows in an orderly manner from the lighting of the sacred fire that announces the beginning of the journey to the reopening of the temple that signifies Ma-Zu's coming home. Its narration embodies the whole process of the Baishatun Ma-Zu pilgrimage on stage. The first half of *Pilgrimage* emphasizes the pilgrims' sufferings and prayers, which heightens the audience's sensations and exposes them to the overall theme of this religious activity. The second half of *Pilgrimage* includes several folk performances of Art Allays, which creates a celebratory atmosphere and offers positive thoughts, wishes, and blessings as a happy ending.

The performances starts with **Act I *Sacred Fire*,** which depicts the whole process of the pilgrimage from the departure of the pilgrims in their home village (with Ma-Zu seated in a sedan chair), to their arrival at their final destination, the Bei-Gong temple, in order to obtain the sacred fire. This act outlines the main theme of Baishatun Ma-Zu pilgrimage. **Act II *The Multitude*** describes the pilgrims and believers of all ages, various backgrounds, both genders, each bringing different stories and wishes as they step into the journey of the Ma-Zu pilgrimage. Within the corps dancers of male and female pilgrims, several characters can be identified in different duet and solo dances and their stories continue

throughout the piece. The role of The Wife can be followed from a duet and later from her solo as she prays for her family. Another role is that of the Mother, who is seen anxiously praying to find her lost child during the pilgrimage. An elder woman depicts the role of the Grandmother and is occasionally accompanied by two kids— her Grandchildren. Her image also implicitly doubles or at least refers to the Goddess Ma-Zu. People believed that Ma-Zu could manifest herself in corporeal form and through that body, she would display her spiritual power and guidance. **Act III *The Pilgrimage*** narrates several plots, encounters, and happenings among the pilgrims during this long walking journey. The first-half of the show ends with the solo dance of the Wife.

**Act IV *Back to Temple*** describes the greeting activities held to welcome Ma-Zu back to her original town and temple. The scene opens with four men playing Zurna, a wind instrument similar to a pipe used widely in folk religious activities, and several women holding big flags as they lead this welcome ceremony. Several Art Arrays are then performed in the plaza. After the inaugural welcome showing of these folk performances, which function to clear the road for Ma-Zu, the Ma-Zu procession moves toward its temple. The Spirit Median guides several service members and the two God Guards of Ma-Zu— Thousands Miles Eye and With the Wind Ear— to open the road for Ma-Zu. Ma-Zu's sedan

chair with its religious box that contains the Sacred Fire finally travels back to its home temple with rejuvenating and renewing power. The final Act ***Renewed Incense and Fire***[25] portrays the reopening of the local temple after the pilgrimage and ends the whole choreography with a sense of blessing.

I suggest that Tsai's *Pilgrimage* represents the multiple artistic directions Tsai has taken TFDT over the past twenty years, instead of being solely a religious dance as it is often depicted. In sum *Pilgrimage* shows Tsai's transformation of the folk performances of Art Arrays on stage, which is a defining trait of "Taiwanese Folk Dance". It also integrates different training methods, such as theater training and modern dance movements to transform the "traditional" body. Furthermore, *Pilgrimage* articulates female perspectives and empowerment within religious meanings and profound expressions. As a result, *Pilgrimage* shows a mixture of dance styles and appears to be very "contemporary", like Tsai's other "New Ethnic Aesthetic" works. Only the Indigenous cultural elements of Taiwan are not included in this piece, likely because Ma-Zu belief is practiced largely by south-Han people. In other words, *Pilgrimage* is a hybrid production that combines various

[25] The English title I use for each act is directly drawn from the program. Only Act V was not offered an English title. I translated this title in English according to its Chinese title and its content.

topics in multiple sections with a mixed and ambiguous sense of bodily aesthetic.

I will further analyze *Pilgrimage* and offer some close readings relating to Tsai's longing for an ideal religious experience and for the expression of female spirituality and power, includes the spiritual connection and female voice, the relation between the field and the stage, and the inter-relationships between the local performing troupe and TFDT as a professional dance company. I will analyze the reconceptualization of Taiwanese (ethnic) body with different trainings in *Pilgrimage* to demonstrate how Tsai opens up the future of contemporary Taiwanese "traditional" dance.

## II. The Spiritual Connection with Ma-Zu for the Choreographer and the Dancers

### 1. Dancing with Sincere Blessings

Tsai's motivation for choreographing a dance about Ma-Zu and its spirituality comes from her compassion for and comprehension of the unpredictability of human life, both in her personal life as well as the public domain, in which religious belief and practices empower her as a woman and as a choreographer. *Pilgrimage* was created by Tsai to express the spiritual power of Ma-Zu and to expresshope both as a blessing and as the

courage needed for her to recover from her sickness. In 2004 Tsai was dealing with health issues in her personal life, struggling to cope with her illness and her extremely busy professional career as a professor, as chair of a dance department, and as the choreographer of TFDT. During the preparation forTFDT's annual production, Tsai had her returned to rehearsals after her surgery. Tsai suggests that "the experience of sickness pushes me to slow down and rethink the values of dance and of life. I appreciate that Ma-Zu spirituality comforts people indefinitely[26]". Staging religious belief, in other words, assists Tsai in overcoming and reconsidering how dance can bring hope to people.

For example, Tsai's choreography highlights the meaning of legacy held by different generations of women and shows Tsai's own intention to offer all the best to the children, the next generation. In the scene *Fighting to be the First* from Act V (see figure 3-1), the Grandmother invites the children to put their incense sticks in the censer first so that the children may share the strongest spiritual power and luck before the other dancers join them.. Then, in the final scene *Around the Incense Burner*, the dancing on stage transforms into an actual religious blessings. All dancers stand in a semi-circle surrounding the censer with their hands held together in prayer. The Grandmother takes her basket circled in the

[26] Li-HuanTsai. Personal Interview. August, 2010.

smoke of incense and gives the children the talismans therein. Followed by other dancers, the grandmother brings them to the audiences' seats and distributes the talismans, an act that signifies sharing the blessings with audiences.

Figure. 3-1. Scene *Fighting to be the First*.

Dancer Jr-Jie Tan suggests that the performance itself is more about a collective blessing and a spiritual connection to an unknown power than to a specific Goddess or God[27]. Tan mentioned that dancers also wanted to offer their blessings to their choreographer's health by putting all their energy into this dance. The close connection among the dancers and the narratives of this dance bring a poignant atmosphere into the

[27] Zhi-Jie Tan. Personal Interview. September, 2010. Tan is Catholicist and felt hesitant to perform this piece at the beginning of rehearsals. He later adjusted his understanding and feeling toward this piece and interprets this dance as a collective blessing instead of a particular religious belief.

theater full of the power of their sincere offering. *Pilgrimage* is not only a dance-drama that narrates the sufferings of human beings in life, but also offers the spiritual empowerment of Ma-Zu to its choreographer, its dancers, and its audience.

### 2. Female Spirituality and Empowerment in Dancing

Also, Tsai wants to bring blessings and hope to women, and in particular to several of her principal female dancers who were also suffering due to unpredictable situations in their lives as mothers and wives. Tsai incorporates the stories of several of her female dancers in solo and duet performances within the narratives of the Ma-Zu pilgrimage. As the creator of this dance company, Tsai is often like a mother and mentor to her dancers who have been working with her over the past decades. She is deeply compassionate and concerned about the difficulties her dancers have faced as well as the general suffering people experience in the world. Since so many of the difficulties individuals face in life, like issues with health and well-being, rely heavily on elements that are outside of their control, Ma-Zu, as the popular religious belief in Taiwan, has become a topic that encourages discussion and promotes strength in many women. Tsai puts forth her best wishes for women in the performance of the Ma-Zu pilgrimage.

Empowerment comes from the dancing itself— from the close relationships between

the company members, and from the spiritual expression of the work that comforts them. The women repeatedly express their stories and hopes through characters like the Mother or the Wife, but also as themselves. At the end of the scene *Crossing the Stream*, the Wife, performed by Lin-Lin Yang, stays on stage dancing a solo that expresses her painful calls for help (see figure. 3-2). While she prays with sincerity to Ma-Zu, with an honest mind, full body, and intense energy, Ma-Zu, dressed onstage by a dancer, stands, as if responding to the Wife's wishes, and empowers her. Behind Ma-Zu is the image of Guan Yin— a goddess from Buddhism who also appears in Taoism and sometimes blends with Ma-Zu as Guan-Yin-Ma[28]. This setting sends all the desires, pains, sorrows, and difficulties towards the spiritual and pacifying powers of religion.

Tsai designs this solo to convey the Wife's story, but also to reflect in dancing Yang's own suffering over her husband's real-life illness. Tsai not only choreographs Yang's hopes and fears into the dance but also stages her strong willpower as a dancer and a wife. In my interviews with Lin-Lin Yang, she expressed how her dance profession and participation in rehearsals and performances gave her the time and space to dance and allowed her to

[28] In Taiwanese folk religions, the practices and religious beliefs of Taoism and Buddhism are often ambiguously mixed in their historical contexts. Accordingly, the image of the Taoist Goddess Ma-Zu has been integrated with the Buddhist God Guan-Yin and has transformed into the amalgamated image of Guan-Yin-Ma.

temporarily escape the pressure and suffering she was experiencing in her family life. Although Yang tore herself apart performing her sufferings on stage, she often felt a sense of spiritual support from her fellow dancers, form the choreographer, from a transcendental connection to the work, and through her dancing, all of which brought a state of peace and blessed serenity to her[29].

Figure. 3-2. The Wife praying in the scene *Crossing the Stream.*

Another example is the narrative of the Mother searching for her child across several scenes. This story also incorporates the life experience of its dancer Lei-Cian Wang and her struggles to resolve her children's health problems that had cast a shadow over that period of her life[30]. In Act II Scene 1, *The Lantern Bearers*, the anxious Mother rushes into the

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[29] Lin-Lin Yang. Personal Interview. March, 2011

[30] Lei-Qian Wang .Personal Interview. October, 2010

space in search of her kids. After a short group dance that demonstrates dynamic moments of prayer, the Mother steps downstage with her arm outreached towards the audience. She then kneels on the floor to pray; she rolls on the ground and moves and jumps repeatedly back and forth in different directions to express her pain and yearning for her kids while the other pilgrims gradually depart. Later, in Act III Scene 3, *The Long Journey*, the Mother blocks the procession of Ma-Zu's sedan and kneels before them to beg for help (see figure 3-3) while Ma-Zu's sedan shakes dynamically from side to side as if listening. As she performs her solo in front of the sedan, the Mother expresses her worry and anxiety to her child. Finally, a miracle happens and the mother is reunited with her child near the end of the journey. The grieving mother finds comfort in Ma-Zu and the other pilgrims, and upon her reunion with her child, her newfound joy confirms and encourages the other pilgrims' beliefs.

Figure. 3-3. The Mother prays in the scene *The Long Journey.*

In sum, Tsai creates the 2004 production *Pilgrimage* to highlight the value of folk and religious activity, (in particular of the Ma-Zu pilgrimage) to create hope, and to offer blessings for the members of her dance company. By transforming herself and her dancers' experiences with the Ma-Zu pilgrimage, Tsai, as an artist, creates her ideal version of the pilgrimage on stage, which includes her own interpretations, predilections, and artistic expressions. I will next further discuss how she incorporates local history and knowledge of the Baishatun Ma-Zu pilgrimage in her work.

## III. Recalling an Ideal Ma-Zu Pilgrimage from the Field

### 1. Artistic Reflection and Transformation of the Baishatun Ma-Zu pilgrimage

Tsai draws from the Baishatun Ma-Zu pilgrimage as her reference for choreographing this piece. I use the term "reference" to highlight the importance that Baishatun Ma-Zu religious practices have as an object of ethnographic research and as a resource of artistic creation. She not only cooperated with and consulted local cultural and historical researchers in the Baishatun village to collect ethnographic knowledge, but also brought her dancers to participate in the Baishatun Ma-Zu Pilgrimage to gain the physical and spiritual experience. Tsai emphasizes that her choreography is based on folklore studies

and ethnographic fieldwork, and therefore has a reference to something authentic, from the "field," and representing the real life of Taiwanese people. She also includes an article about the history of Baishatun and an article by local scholar Xu-Shan Liang about the importance of Baishatun Ma-Zu in the program[31] to provide the audience with a historical and cultural context for this choreography. These references are emphasized in Tsai's *Pilgrimage* so that she can claim the authenticity of her Taiwanese dance creation.

However, *Pilgrimage* is an artistic creation that includes Tsai's interpretations and reshaping of the material. One of the local pilgrims came to the performance and suggested that as an artistic creation, *Pilgrimage* adds another level to the transformation of the events physical experience; it provides a space for artists to digest and reflect upon his or her experience that pilgrims don't generally have the chance to express[32]. From this perspective, the dance creation is not simply "representing" the original pilgrimage on stage but offers a space for reflection on it in the theater.

The texts of the local history are collected from the memories of families and individuals. These stories are then shared, create the collective memory of the local

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[31] Xu-Shan Liang "About Baishatun Pilgrimage" notes of program

[32] Wen-Tsui Wu. "Talking about Taipei Folk Dance Theater's Pilgrimage: the First Ma-Zu Dance Drama".2005 Baishatun Pilgrimage Journal. p38-41.

community, and spread this knowledge to outside communities through multiple transformations, circulations, and accumulations. The shared enthusiasm for a community-based history—one that both honors their existence and helps gain visibility among other communities—contributes to the increased endeavors of local younger generation intellectual to collects and reconstruct the oral histories, local family stories, and daily practices of the villages in which they grew up. Tsai's *Pilgrimage* further interprets local religious practices from an outsider's perspective and circulates this local collective memory to the communities outside Baishatun village, such as the dance communities in Taipei.

**2. Circulating Local Memory onto Stage**

Tsai's *Pilgrimage* incorporates several scenarios and focuses in particular on the context of the Baishatun Ma-Zu pilgrimage. By depicting these events through choreography, Tsai firmly grounds it within the social and cultural experiences on the land of Taiwan. For example, Act III Scene IV *Crossing the Stream* draws from the historical miracle of Ma-Zu and is choreographed from visual and textual records about the event as it happened in 2003, the year before *Pilgrimage* premiers. "Crossing the Stream" is a very important event that not only attracts outsider attention to the pilgrims but also melds the

identity of the community's local younger generation to the pilgrimage. In 2003, the Baishatun Ma-Zu led its followers across the Jhuoshuei River[33] safely and directly instead of passing on the bridge above the river[34]. This event recalls and re-embodies the old path of the Baishatun Ma-Zu pilgrimage in which Ma-Zu brings all walkers together without losing a single person[35]. This event is also conceived as an embodied recollection that demonstrates what the pilgrimage used to be like in earlier times, before industrialization. In other words, this event connects the stories of the past with the practices of the present and through this connection, the powers of Ma-Zu, from both the past and the present, coexist in an united religious belief.

The scene *Crossing the Stream* starts with the "Three Times Advance-and-Retreat[36]" pattern moving Ma-Zu's sedan chair in the center of the stage. The sedan suddenly steers towards the audience and descends into to the audiences' seats, which alludes to Ma-Zu guiding the Baishatun pilgrimage down to the river. All the dancers follow Ma-Zu in two

[33] Jhuoshuei River is the longest river in Taiwan.

[34] 2003 Baishatun Jounal

[35] 2003 Baishatun Jounal

[36] "Three Times Advance-and-Retreat" is a performed series of coded movements representing the motion of the Goddess's or God's sedan chair in Taoist religious practices. This performance signifies that the sedan chair is going to enter or leave a temple, or is going to lead its followers in a particular direction.

lines, framing the river, and walk through the audience before departing along the side. In effect, Tsai's choreography circulates this ritual experience and transforms it into a dance performance in urban audience's memory. Accordingly, Tsai's choreographic translation of the event contributes to the discourses on, and the constructions of collective memory about the religious power of Baishatun Ma-Zu.

Also, the performing of "Crawl under Ma-Zu," literally the pilgrims physically probe and pass under Ma-Zu's sedan chair in an attempt to obtain Ma-Zu's blessings, is another representation of the event happened in the field. This action occurs frequently in Ma-Zu pilgrimages because this is the only opportunity to be passed under the chair, when it is moving through the streets instead of sitting on a pedestal inside a local temple. This moment is also a chance for local residents who do not live close to the temple to meet and to express their hopes directly to Ma-Zu in her journey. It is believed that having Ma-Zu pass above one's body and one's material belongings can grant spiritual power to that person. As a result, one can often observe an elder grandmother bringing her sick grandson, a mother bringing the clothes of her sick child, or families bringing their sick grandfather in a wheelchair to kneel down and wait on the streets for Ma-Zu to pass by. The very long and seemingly endless line of people on the streets, their hopes, sufferings, and prayers so

sincere and full of heart, is always the most touching scene in the Ma-Zu pilgrimage.

In Tsai's *Pilgrimage*, dancers kneel down in a line with their upper bodies leaning forward touching the ground and waiting for Ma-Zu's sedan to pass over their bodies (see figure 3-4), just as they had done on the streets. However, without the crowds and cars, and without the lengthy lines of people waiting for extensive periods of time, the movements and the order in which they are performed by the dancers create a symbolic image to share with the audience the scenery in their memories. Although the clean and beautified sequences highlight the intensity of the praying and illustrate people's strong belief in Ma-Zu practices, the delivery of this poignant emotion relies highly on evoking the audience's own memories, in which their physical and emotional experiences can be recalled in order to heighten their sentiment as they experience the performance in the theater. In other words, if the audience has very few experiences, or has only seen Ma-Zu's pilgrimage on television, Tsai's intention of bridging the field and the theater may not be fully achieved.

Figure. 3-4. The Performance of “Crawl under Ma-Zu”

Therefore, Tsai not only draws her inspiration from the Ma-Zu pilgrimage but also incorporates its narratives, materials, and embodied practices in her choreography. She bases her choreography on her ethnographic experiences, interviews with folklore scholars, and the stories that circulate about the Baishatun Ma-Zu pilgrimage. These materials collected from the “field” offer her the foundation for the authenticity and authority she brings to stage this Ma-Zu pilgrimage in the theater. Yet, at the same time, the transformation of the local events from “the field” into an artistic production is a dynamic process; it is an act of creation in which both “the field” and the choreography are never fixed to a time in the past or a space in the theatrical present. Tsai’s *Pilgrimage* is one of multiple interpretations of the Baishatun Ma-Zu pilgrimage and offers a space for the artist to articulate and to share her reflection on an ideal religious experience and the spiritual power that the Ma-Zu belief offers.

## IV. The Inter-relationships between the Field and the Theater

Because Tsai works on both presenting local religious practices and transforming them into theater creations, the inter-relationship between the two is almost hidden in Tsai's choreography, yet some traces remain. In discussing the different interactions that occurred between the field and the urban theater in Tsai's *Pilgrimage*, I intend to reveal her process for constructing a Taiwanese folk dance that is professionalized and contemporary rather than conventional and unchanging. I argue that Tsai bridges a gap between the field and the theater as well as the folk and the elite, thus allowing for multiple points of intersection where influences flow in multiple directions.

### 1. From Folk Performance on the Street to Dance in the Theater

In order to present the Taoist religious activities of the Ma-Zu pilgrimage, Tsai stages some authentic Art Arrays to construct a religious atmosphere and create a folk-like energy in the theater. As I discuss in this final section, Tsai has often invited folk artists to train her dancers so they can accurately perform these specific pieces that are usually performed on the street. For *Pilgrimage*, Tsai invited a folk performing troupe "Na-Cha Studio of Folk Art," a group she met in a government organized touring performance in Korea in 2002, to

participate in this performance. “Na-Cha Studio of Folk Art” is a semi-professional performing arts troupe organized by an upcoming generation of folk artists. The company regularly performs in local religious events on the streets. Not only was its leader Chi-Hung Kao responsible for training Tsai’s dancers to perform several Art Arrays, but the members of this folk troupe were also involved in several sections of *Pilgrimage* that require special costumes and characters. Accordingly, although the majority of the performance is executed by her own dancers, Tsai integrates a local folk troupe with her urban “professional” performers in her presentation of this dance-drama.

Tsai invited this troupe to bring its energy, character, and technique, all qualities learned while performing in local street rituals, to TFDT. For example, Kao taught and trained male dancers to perform the Art Array, “Senior Officers of Generals (Guan Jiang Shou)” (see figure 3-5), which is a standard in his folk troupe’s repertoire and one that they are often invited to perform at religious events. “Senior Officers and Generals” is an Art Array that is composed of five generals who move in specific patterns of steps and positions, enacting an expulsion of evil spirits and clearing space for Goddesses or Gods. Each of the dancers has a specific role with a prop, so their faces are painted with different patterns.

Figure. 3-5. the Senior Officers and Generals (Guan Jiang Shou)

In *Pilgrimage*, Kao and his members perform along with the other dancers. He would basically take over roles where more experience was required, such as the Spirit Median. Although he did not enter a state of "trance" on the stage, Kao represented the character of the median—a character that plays an important role in assisting the Goddesses or Gods to deliver their decrees. Other members of the folk troupe generally perform with the big Puppets of Gods that are brought in by the troupe itself. By integrating this folk troupe into the performance of *Pilgrimage*, Tsai gains a kind of authority through their authentic performances and brings the folk troupe a theater performing experience.

Also, as mentioned previously, TFDT's dancers have to be trained in order to perform these folk performances. Although some of the dancers may have learned some folk performances during their studies, most of them have to learn the repertoires of Art Arrays in order to perform them on stage. In *Pilgrimage*, Kao taught these repertoires to TFDT's

dancers. Working with them, Kao observed that these dancers have "beautiful" movements and elegance, but these are qualities very different from folk performers[37]. The raw energy and "folk" qualities that Kao's troupe acquired performing in the street environment are not easily portrayed by the Tsai's trained dancers.

Specific training is needed not only to perform the patterns and steps of these characters but also to engage with its religious meaning and a state of sacredness. To deepen the companies understanding of the performance of "The Ghost Killer (Chung Kui)" in *Pilgrimage* Tsai hired a master from Peking Opera School to work with the dancers[38]. The performance of Chung Kui is believed to be a powerful and mythical ritual performance in folk religion of Taiwan and functions not simply to expel evil ghosts but also to subdue goblins. This performance has a strong religious impact; people often avoid direct contact with or keep their distance from this performance, when Chung Kui is enacted in local religious practices.

The performance begins with the three ghost guards of Chung Kui. One holds an umbrella, one holds a lantern and the other holds a metal calling order, demonstrating their

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[37] Chi-Hung Kao.Personal Interview. March, 2011.

[38] Although enacting Chung Kui is considered a folk performance in contemporary society where religion is demystified, the repertoire of Chung Kiu is also performed by higher ranked folk performers and Peking Opera masters.

skills. Later, a ghost dressed in yellow appears and moves sneakily while rolling acrobatically and with flexibility. Chung Kui comes to the stage and demonstrates the pattern of steps and movements that tells the audience his character. He later takes the ghost under control even sitting on it (see figure 3-6). Chung Kui's facial expressions are mostly enraged expressing his power, but this combines with playful moments from time to time to show his enjoyment in teaching the ghost a lesson. This section of the performance ends with the whole troupe marching down stage.

Dancer Tan discusses how he learned to perform Chung Kui and explains that "It was a great challenge to perform Chung-Kui because playing this character does not simply involve performing a God, it also requires entering into a state of mind that combines grand, twisted, and heated emotions with its angry expressions for justice and for expelling evil spirits.[39]" His comments suggest that it is not an easy task for dancers to stage these specific characters from folk performances and that it requires long-term training to enter its sacred space.

[39] Zhi-Jie Tan. Personal Interview. September, 2010

Figure 3-6. The Ghost Killer, Chung Kui

## 2. The Use of Theatrical Aesthetics by Younger Folk Performers

The aesthetics of theater performance have some impact on the development of contemporary Taiwanese folk performing troupes in terms of choreography, training and "professional" reputation. The revival of Folk performance started as early as the 1980s in an effort to construct "localized" cultural representations and policies, however these folk performances were still seen as low-brow and vulgar cultural practices in public opinion (a prejudice that still surfaces today). These folk performances have also struggled to compete as mass media and industrialization shift Taiwanese society from an agricultural community to a post-modern one, and thus some accommodations have to be made in order to entice a contemporary audience and their interests.

The "Na-Cha Studio of Folk Art" was organized by Chi-Hung Kao in 1995, who was only in his twenties at that time; he was a young folk performance reformist rather than an

old master. Because he had learned and performed many folk performances since he was little, he has often been seen as the expert of Art Arrays. His troupe is famous for its delicate performance style and rich colorful costumes, both of which are reshaping of the traditional ways of doing folk performances. Traditional and older communities criticized Kao's reformation of this folk material however; it seemed to suit the interests of many audiences and young people[40]. Kao's group has not only toured to different local religious events in Taiwan but are also sent to perform in folk festivals overseas, and even invited to perform for films, TV shows, and commercial promotions. In other words, the "Na-Cha Studio of Folk Art" has as its mission the transmission of folk performance while polishing these practices with contemporary concerns and flavors to attract audiences and to keep folk performance alive.

The creation of this troupe shows the efforts of younger generations not simply to preserve but also to transmit these practices so they might survive in contemporary Taiwan society. One of Kao's intentions is to challenge the stereotype that equates Folk performers with gang members and criminals. He organized this troupe with the hope of finding ways to pass on to future generations these folk performances and their religious values—values

[40] Chi-Hung Kao.Personal Interview. March, 2011

that he feels drawn to, tightly connected with, and with which he spent most of his childhood and adolescence. Kao hopes to organize a performing troupe that learns and performs with serious respect and dedication that can change the public's misconception about folk performances, and that can secure and maintain a future for this material. The members of this troupe are all young men who are interested in making a career out of the performance of Art Array, although they generally cannot totally earn their living solely from it. Most of the members of these troupes perform whenever there are religious events and have other jobs to support them in the meantime.

Kao's effort shows that professionalization[41] is increasingly becoming an important direction for folk troupes among young enthusiasts and supporters of these folk arts. Rather than the conventional trend of gathering performers right before (and for the sole purpose of) the event, these new troupes hold regular rehearsals on top of their performances. In addition, they also participate in the folk performance competitions or folk festivals internationally gaining visibility both locally and globally. In other words, they have transformed their positions from amateur players to professional folk artists. It is for these

[41] Kao clarifies that for him, a "professional" folk performers is not to simply someone who earns money by joining in a lot of religious events regardless the quality of performances, like many traditional folk troupes did, but instead, individuals who perform with a professional attitude and maintain a good reputation throughout their performances. Chi-Hung Kao.Personal Interview. March, 2011

reasons that Kao claims his experience working with TFDT was an opportunity for him to learn how to choreograph and to train his members professionally[42].

This transformation from amateur to professional is not solely a response to the demands of younger generations but also to an emerging market for constructing religious activities into "cultural festivals" in Taiwan. In order to convert a local Ma-Zu pilgrimage into a national or an international "cultural festival", these folk performances require "professional" qualities and aesthetics in order to appeal to tourists, especially those from urban areas of Taiwan and from foreign countries. What used to be considered a part of "folk culture" now has to be transformed into nuanced "performing arts" for these national and international cultural festivals. When professional or semi-professional dance groups are invited to perform in cultural festivals, they constitute a sense of "internationality" coexisting with other foreign performing groups. Local folk performing troupes often have to compete for their audience's attention in terms of performance, costumes and techniques, with these other professional arts groups. As a result, transforming folk performances has become necessary in order for them to survive in contemporary Taiwanese and in these new emerging performance markets and cultural festivals.

[42] Chi-Hung Kao.Personal Interview. March, 2011

### 3. Popularized Folk Performance as Local, National, and International Symbols

Cultural influence does not simply flow from the tastes of the cultural elites to those of locals, nor from the "high art" of the theater to the "low art" of folk performance. In fact, often a longing for something folk— something connected to local culture and to old traditions—may bring traditional folk performances to the fore of new creation, gaining attention from artists as well as national visibility. These inter-relationships are fluid and change with time and according to political and social contexts. After discussing how Tsai's *Pilgrimage* illustrates the different flows of influence between local and concert performances, I would like to use the performance of "The Third Prince (Ne-Zha)" to show how the desire for reviving a folk performance is articulated on different stages.

Anthropologist David B. Coplan suggests that the flows of cultural influence between rural and urban areas are not unidirectional but are rather composed of multiple layers and pathways. He argues that mixture is fundamental to styles and values in South African culture, suggesting that South African culture is the "culture of mobility.[43]" (398) His analysis of the inter-textuality of particular forms suggests that meanings and symbols not

[43] David B. Coplan, *In township tonight! : South Africa's black city music and theatre*, 2nd ed., Chicago studies in ethnomusicology (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

only exist through music systems but are also constructed in relation to social systems. Similarly, folk performance in Taiwan is not simply constructed as a representation of the old tradition but also as a new popular cultural symbol for claiming selfhood and expressing a local identity.

In Tsai's *Pilgrimage,* she includes a dancing performance of "the Third Prince (Ne-Zha)" as a giant God Puppet. In traditional religious practices, the performer shoulders and is covered by a big puppet depicting Ne-Zha with only his legs shown as he walks on the street with other Gods in sedans and other God Puppets. In the conventional way of performing, Ne-Zha's puppet often walks in a more childish manner with a light step to show his character as the Child-God; in this way, Ne-Zha, can be distinguished from the other God Puppets. Tsai has the Ne-Zha God Puppet perform these steps while creating a boisterous and happy atmosphere that counterbalances the heavy emotional content found in many of the narratives of the *Pilgrimage*. At the same time, this use of Ne-Zha also refers to the popularization of the folk performance of Ne-Zha in Taiwanese culture, which later even became a national symbol of Taiwan.

In the performance of Ne-Zha in *Pilgrimage*, the performer wearing the God puppet walks with jig-like steps on the stage (see figure 3-7). Ne-Zha can be identified by the

props he holds; in his right hand he plays with a long spear while in his left he holds a ring of fire. The performer spins in a big circle on stage, which makes the God puppet's clothes fly. He demonstrates some steps and some postures to illustrate his childish personality and his position as a martial general. The performance of Ne-Zha creates a cute and interesting atmosphere and is later joined by four other God Generals that bring a dignified mood.

Figure 3-7. The Third Prince, Ne-Zha

The revival and reinterpretation of folk performances has become a popular trend in recent Taoist religious practices in Taiwan— a new and young way of doing old folk performance. A recent example of this is the creation of "Electronic Music Ne-Zha," which is quite literally a performance with a Ne-Zha Puppet to an electronic style of popular music (rather than to traditional religious music) allowing the performer to execute light-hearted movements in an approachable and endearing way, and to get attention from the audience. A group of young artists began experimenting with this kind of performance

but now several performance troupes are attempting to claim ownership over this style, though none have been successful in this endeavor. “Electronic Music Ne-Zha” was soon widely spread and popularized in folk performances outside religious contexts, such as cultural festivals and various public events, but it rarely appears in religious ceremonies because it is not considered serious enough to represent sacredness.

This new way of performing with a God Puppet is welcomed by younger people, because it combines popular music with dance and brings a sense of delight and humor to the performance. Traditional Taoist religious practices are often seen as less appealing to this generation because these practices appear to be old-fashioned to those living a contemporary life accustomed to technological indulgences and grand scale spectacles. The newly created “Electronic Music Ne-Zha” grabs young people’s attention and holds their interests to watch and even learn this cute performance, even though it meets some opposition from its religious traditions.

However, this new style for performing Ne-Zha still exists in this new contemporary spirit with the same child-like personality of its original religious character. Accordingly, this new shift draws on contemporary interpretation to perform a traditional meaning, instead of following the more conventional method of teaching it exactly the same from

one generation to the next. , In the contemporary context, people may be becoming disenchanted with religion in general and they often appreciate these folk performances on the streets with less concern about their religious significance. As a result, "Electronic Music Ne-Zha" is a new way for choreographing and performing with God puppets that has become a popular spectacle that is both attractive to young people and somewhat maintains its religious context even while transforming it into an entertaining performance.

The performance of "Electronic Music Ne-Zha" also becomes a national symbol of Taiwan on the international stage. For example, the opening ceremony of the 2009 World Games, held in Kaohsiung city in Taiwan, incorporates forty Ne-Zha God Puppets into its performance[44]. Instead of walking onto the stage, these Ne-Zha God Puppets ride motorcycles (another popular image of Taiwan) into the plaza and then perform their sweet and pleasant dances with music. This section was praised by most of the Taiwanese audience because it simultaneously raised the excitement and energy the crowd while highlighting the local culture of southern Taiwan. This celebration of rural life in Taiwan is particularly associated with Kaohsiung and with Taiwan is depicted at this international

[44] For details on the choreography of the opening show, please see Ping, Heng. "The Spectacular Dance – 2009 World Games in Taiwan" SDHS 2010 conference proceeding. P243-252.

event. Therefore, the revived and popularized folk performance of Ne-Zha was used to stage something old in a new way so that it can reestablish its connection to the culture of Taiwan.

As a result, the performance of The Third Prince, Ne-Zha, is choreographed in various ways in order to increase his visibility. From the more traditional ways of performing Ne-Zha, whether in local religious events or in Tsai's theatrical versions, to the innovating ways of representing the character with electronic music and popular dance, the lived performance of The Third Prince blends contemporary revisions and concerns with its traditional references and narratives. The urban taste for spectacle and the local taste for humor are mixed into the popularization of Ne-Zha as a cultural symbol. Although it is still debatable about the cultural position of Ne-Zha performance in the hierarchy of middle-class aesthetics, it is undeniable that its performance is highly visible both nationally and internationally. This seemingly old and dead traditional performance invites new creations and interpretations and is never frozen in the past.

### V. The Released Body and its Multiple Training Methods in *Pilgrimage*

Tsai combines several different elements in her choreography for *Pilgrimage*: Folk

performances of Art Array, solos and duets featuring contemporary narratives, embodied scenarios and stories from the field, as well as ritual symbols of religious expressions and spiritual connections. I will further analyze how multiple dancing bodies are articulated in this choreography, and how they are produced with the help of several training methods used in rehearsals. The bodily aesthetics of *Pilgrimage* are different from the classical body used in TFDT's previous productions of Chinese dance and religious dance, which incorporated elegant postures, curvilinear principles, and highlighted alignment, extensions, and energy. *Pilgrimage* is also different from Tsai's earlier choreography in that it presents an early folk body aesthetic from the Taiwanese Art Array, in which grounded weight, shaking, bouncing, and less-controlled energy are emphasized. The majority of the dancing bodies employed in *Pilgrimage* demonstrate Tsai's inclination for a "release" from the form and to shape the dancing body through different training.

1. **Embodied experiences from Theater Training and the Ma-Zu pilgrimage**

In preparation for *Pilgrimage* in 2004, Tsai invited Wen-Tsui Wu to be a theatrical director and teacher in order to bring theater concepts of performance into this dance. Wu held workshops for the dancers for three months and was also involved in the rehearsal process. Her workshop introduced and integrated several bodily training practices, such as

those of Jerzy Grotowski, Butoh, and yoga[45]. She wanted to help dancers explore their bodies and revise their conceptualization of movement in a way that was different from their previous dance training (which required the dancer's body to be "beautiful," skillful, and spectacular according to the conventional criteria of ballet and concert artistic dance). The theater training that Wu taught the dancers challenged these mainstream concepts of the dancing body in Taiwan.

Tsai wanted the dancers to participate in Ma-Zu religious practices in order to understand and appreciate the spirituality and religious meanings that come from those actual experiences—experiences that emphasize a physical perspective and require an attentive awareness and commitment of both mind and body. Most of the dancers participated in the Baishatun Ma-Zu Pilgrimage in 2004. Wu was invited to prepare and give dancers a general understanding of the pilgrimage because of her long history of involvement in the walking of this pilgrimage. In her pre-pilgrimage workshop, Wu shared her experiences and some strategies to adjust and to alleviate the pains caused by the walking. She also accompanied the dancers and assisted them when needed during the

[45] Wen-Tsui Wu. Personal Interview. June, 2010

actual pilgrimage, on top of her duty as a gong player in the Baishatun Ma-Zu pilgrimage[46]. Her responsibility was to lead the dancers, to awaken their sensations, through the walking process of the pilgrimage.

From my interviews with several dancers in 2010, which is admittedly a long span of time between the performance and our discussion, most of them still vividly remember the sense of divinity and the touching spiritual power embodied in this Ma-Zu pilgrimage. They recalled that it was a very long and very tiring journey. Their physical experience was then transformed into their performance in the 2004 *Pilgrimage*, especially in the very beginning scene of Act I, *The Procession* (see figure 3-8). In this scene, dancers line up and slowly pass through the stage from the left to the right under the light of dawn, which signifies that the pilgrimage procession began early in the morning. After several members carry the religious parasol and banners, and after the two God Guards of Ma-Zu, one man sounds a gong and leads four carriers shouldering Ma-Zu's sedan, gently sway, onto the stage. Pilgrims, most of whom are female, hold a small flag in front of their chests and enter behind Ma-Zu's sedan. The whole rank of pilgrims walks in silence except for the

[46] Wu is a gong player, who accompanies the shaking rhythms of Ma-Zu's sedan. It is an honor that she, as an outsider of Baishatun village, is allowed to participate in the event with the core members of the service closest to Ma-Zu. These members have to be agreed upon and selected by Ma-Zu, and must train together before the pilgrimage.

rhythmic gong that accompanies the pilgrimage with an engrossing intensity. Unlike the often over-stretched and uplifted energy in most dance performances, the dancers here walk with knees bent slightly and slouched body revealing their embodied experiences during the pilgrimage. Dancers peacefully and randomly pass through the stage to demonstrate the scenery of countless pilgrims walk by.

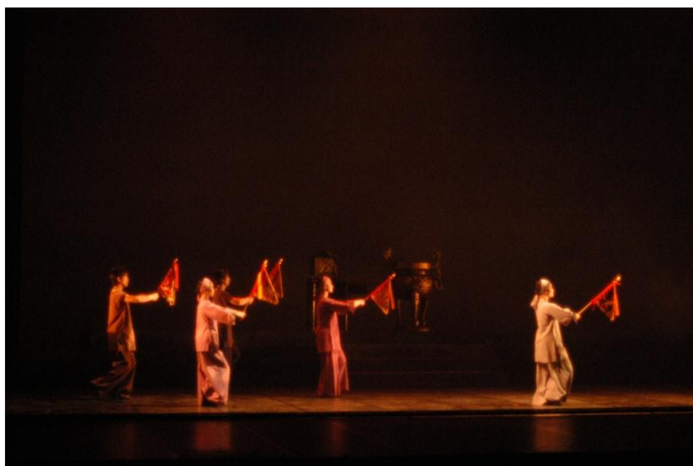
Figure. 3-8. Pilgrims walk in the *The Procession*

However, the dancers' experience walking in the pilgrimage seems to have only contributed to the performance of *Pilgrimage* in 2004 without being ingrained in their long-term muscle memory as their other dance trainings did. It is likely because instead of joining the pilgrimage annually like Wu does, the dancers were only involved in the pilgrimage once for this dance production. They rarely returned or renewed the walking experience of this long journey and therefore, this experience may not have had a great

impact in reshaping their bodies and movements from a long term perspective. In other words, the pilgrimage experience mainly created immediate effects such as the interpretations of spiritual powers and the emotional projections on the staging of *Pilgrimage* in 2004.

### 2. Unchaining the "Ethnic" Dancing Body in Tai-Chi Dao-Yin Training

Perceived as the intellectual property of ancient Chinese culture, Tai-Chi has also been used in transforming and distinguishing a Taiwanese "folk" or "ethnic" body. We-Ren Lee[47], a premier dancer and producer of TFDT, introduced Tai-Chi Dao-Yin[48] and different schools of Tai-Chi Chuan[49] as part of the company's regular training in 2000. TFDT had a brief hiatus beginning in 1998 but was reinstated in 2000 with the support of its previous dancers. The introduction of Tai-Chi, along with other concepts of the dancing body, can be seen as an important contribution to the shift of the aesthetic direction for TFDT.

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[47] We-Ren Lee was a theater student who started training in Tai-Chi during his work with U theater in 1995.

[48] Tai-Chi Dao-Yin was created by the master Xiong-Wei and constructed as a new interpretation and practice system different from the traditional Tai-Chi Chuan. It was introduced by Wen-Tsai Wu to Cloud Gate Dance Theater and it became the major physical training for the dancers of Cloud Gate dance Theater in 1995. The influence of this new training method can be seen in the choreography of Moon Water in 1998 and later productions such as *Cursive:A Trilogy*. For further discussion on the Could Gate's employment of Tai-Chi Dao-Yin and its relation to the concept of "flexibility," how it refers to the dancing body and its choreographic and survival strategies in the era of globalization, please see chapter four of Ya-Yin Lin's Ph.D. dissertation.

[49] He also introduced Yuanmen Tai-Chi as part of this training. Wen-Ren Lee .Personal Interview. October, 2010

As TFDT's returning year production in 2000, *The Obsession of Mandala* is often seen as an important turning point of TFDT and an innovative Buddhist dance drama, in which the Tai-Chi Dao-Yin training of the company brings a very different quality of dancing to the bodies on stage. This dance drama narrates the four stages of Buddhist self-cultivation in which the individual comes to examine his beliefs differently in each stage. The individual passes through the fantasy of a fairyland, the temptations of evil spirits, the lonely journey of meditation, and finally the arrival of the Buddhist spiritual world[50]. In order to express this religious story and its philosophy, a merge of both "traditional" movements from Chinese fairy dances and contemporary dance techniques are employed to demonstrate the desire, the struggles and the ideal religious status present in this narrative. While TFDT's interest in the aesthetic of "traditional" dance maintains its artistic focus on recreating graceful, classical, and therefore "traditional" expressions of the body (thereby providing a familiar bodily context that the audience can appreciate), the way that the dancing body is changed through Tai-Chi Sao-Yin training further highlights the fluidity of each angle of the body and the power and the strength following through the seemingly twisted yet delicate movements. *The Obsession of Mandala* merges the two

[50] The Program note of *The Obsession of Mandala.*

body aesthetics and demonstrates its emphasis on the connection of "Body-Mind-Meanings," the subject of the "New Ethnic Aesthetic" that I will discuss later.

*Pilgrimage*, which premiered in 2004, was a new production that came after *The Obsession of Mandala*—another work that also demonstrated some accumulations from previous Tai-Chi training. Although TFDT showcased other productions between 2000 and 2004, most of them were restaging of old repertoires rather than new productions. Reading the dancing body in *Pilgrimage*, especially in the sections featuring the group's danced prayers, the transition from one posture to another is less about being "beautiful" and having perfect curves, but instead has more breath and a sense of aliveness. The ending of a group dance in the scene *Dance of the Pilgrims* is a good example here (see figure 3-9). Gathered again and joined by the grandmother in the center, they circle together and spread their arms out in different directions creating a visual decorative pattern that is often characteristic of traditional dance. Yet what makes it different is that this scene has a fluid rather than rigid energy. The dancers do not attempt to perfect the posture or the pattern, but rather, with their breaths, they relax their bodies as they shift from one gesture or direction to another without requiring the repetition of their previous alignment. In other words, coherence rather than correspondence is highlighted in this work.

Figure. 3-9. *Dance of the Pilgrims.*

Although there is an attempt to undo preconceived notions of the "ethnic" body type, the dancers' bodies sometimes portray an awkward struggle, in which the movements are not easily executed and the flow from one pose or gesture to another is cumbersome. Lee suggests that the influence of Tai-Chi Dao-Yin is not as discernible on the dancers' bodies in *Pilgrimage*, because many of them are new dancers and have had less training[51]. Accordingly, the influences of Tai-Chi Dao-Yin in *Pilgrimage*, although subtle, have shown some traces on the dancers' bodies. Dance training, such as Tai-Chi Dao-Yin in this case, requires a great deal of time for the reconceptualization of the body to be fully digested and memorized by the dancers' bodies. Tsai's attempt should be seen as an

[51] Wen-Ren Lee .Personal Interview. October, 2010

endeavor to explore a new interpretation and a new approach to understanding the body in order to achieve her ideals of Taiwanese dance. The accumulation of Tai-Chi Dao-Yin trainings along with other types of Tai-Chi trainings has gradually increased its impact on the dancers in later productions of TFDT.

From TFDT's alternate training methods, we can see how Tsai pushes the conventional concept of "traditional" dance creation forward and how the dancing body is revised to allow more space for examining the potential of the "ethnic" style. With an emphasis in articulating the relationship between the mind and the body in this religious dance, Tsai draws from her theater training, from physical experience in the field, and from Tai-Chi Dao-Yin's concepts to explore the potential of the "ethnic" dancing body in her dance creations.

**Section Three: Classifications in Trouble: Contemporary "Traditional" "Taiwanese" Dance?**

**I. Too "Modern" and Too "Traditional": The Ambiguous Position of TFDT**

The dance creations of TFDT have brought a reconsideration of "ethnic" or "folk" dance to light with its various debates about the binary of the "modern" and of the "traditional." Tsai has suffered from some critics on her works as either too "modern" or too "traditional,"[52] which reveal the difficulty of her choreographies to satisfy the different expectations and to fit into such binary categories. Tsai claims her choreographies are based on certain cultural practices and folk performances of Taiwan that have been existed for a long time and as a result, her works, although transformed onto stage, are supposed to be treated as part of "traditional" culture while continued in different contexts. But at the same time, Tsai also acknowledges that the choreographed works are new creations different from the old ones and have their contemporary meaning and context in theater condition. These contemporary "traditional" dances that Tsai choreographed are set into trouble by the biased ideology to separate the two.

[52] Tsai suggests that as a female choreographer who works on traditional dance in Taiwan, her works have been put in a martial position and are ignored. People who do not understand the value of these traditional materials and her ways of transformation often criticize her dances as appearing too close to modern dance or too traditional to be a dance creation. Tsai, Li-Hua. Personal Interview 2. April, 2011.

The critiques about "traditional" choreographies being "too modern" have been raised not simply in recent years but since the early building of the Chinese *Min-Zu* dance in 1950s Taiwan. As I discussed in Chapter One, ballet techniques and Western folk dance steps were employed in creating the revival version of the Chinese *Min-Zu* dance. At that time, the use of these western influences had to be well concealed under the movements, traditional costumes, and patriotic topics of Peking opera in order to avoid the criticism of a "westernized" performance and of losing the traditional values of Chinese culture. These types of critiques have not been resolved and continue to accompany the development of "traditional" dance in Taiwan. The evaluating criteria of "traditional" dance are bounded with its origins in the past without concerning its contemporality, performers, and audience in the presence.

However, from my discussion on what is too "modern" and too "traditional," we can read that the ambiguous boundary between the two, in fact, is a borderline that intends to make a division between the Eastern and the Western along the line of associating with the past and of associating with the contemporary and therefore the future. This borderline denies the possibility that the Eastern body aesthetic, although as a continuity from the cultural practices in the past, is also part of the contemporary creation and a possible

version of a future. This division also ignores that the “Western” dance techniques, such as modern dance and ballet, are also parts of cultural “tradition” of the West, no matter these dance training are a succession of previous tradition or an opposition.

The intention to divide the two is further problematic in consideration of the concept of “choreograph” as a verb and of “choreography” as a norm in the contemporary practices of Taiwanese “traditional” dance. Dance scholar Susan L. Foster traces the history of developing the concept of “choreography” in the United States pedagogical contexts and discusses how the category of “ethnic dance” and later “world dance” was conceived as unchanging dance techniques and dance pieces of certain cultural systems in the world.[53] She points out that the different aspects of “choreography” and “improvisation” are largely ignored in the division of modern dance, ballet, and “others’ dance” as the “world dance.” Learning the dance education system from the U.S.A., the Taiwanese held a similar binary concept while continuing to struggle with the unfitted and awkward feeling toward the “traditional” dance choreographies. In Taiwan, while the concept of modern dance creation allowed the integration of dance movements, in which even the “traditional” elements are

[53]Foster. Susan L., "Choreographies and Choreographers," in *Worlding Dance*, ed. Susan L. Foster (Basingstoke : Palgrave Macmillan: 2009)..

freely deconstructed for the innovations and artistic achievements they offer to the modern dance genre. Similar creativity and investigations are generally unwelcomed, ignored, and even criticized in the so-called ‘traditional” dance works. The “traditional” dance is seen as a fixed repertoire and the artistic value of its contemporary choreography is largely ignored, even when these “traditional” dances are created as concert dance pieces on the stage of theater and with the names of their choreographers titled on them. In other words, these “traditional” dances are already the artistic creations, away from their “original,” ethnographic or historical contexts, and staged for the contemporary audiences in contemporary Taiwan, instead of authorless, collectively created, and community-based dance traditions on the field.

The difficulty to position TFDT’s works in certain category is further disclosed in her new direction of the “New Ethnic Aesthetic,” which is a fusion of East and West aesthetics. Tsai’s intention to free a space for innovations and a possible future for “traditional” dance further challenges the fixed boundary between the “modern” and the “traditional.” As early as 1997, Tsai held an annual concert *Special People, a Different Kind of Dance.* Several young choreographers were invited to create six contemporary dance creations, each with innovative transformation from classical and folk dance vocabularies. But it was not until

the introduction of Tai-Chi Dao-Yin and of other training methods in 2000 that the goal of the "New Ethnic Aesthetic" has a clear definition and distinguished development and direction.[54]

Tsai suggests that "New Ethnic Aesthetic" emphasizes on embodying the integrating mode of "body-mind-meaning"[55] (the three major aspects of dancing according to her) rather than the conventional expression of joyful celebration in traditional ethnic and folk dances. This direction also encourages and invites younger generation choreographers to hire innovative approaches in transforming, revising, and composing traditional and folk materials with the expressions of contemporary topics and concerns. In other words, the dances of the New Ethnic Aesthetic do not emphasize on its authority from an (unknown) ancient origin or cultural continuity, but instead to emphasize its creativity on deconstructing, playing with, and extending the codified ethnic expressions. Simply put, the works of "New Ethnic Aesthetic" are contemporary dance creations that fuse Chinese

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[54] Especially after 2000, several of TFDT's productions focuses on Buddhist expressions have formulated a distinguishable style composed the concept of Zen with Tai-Chi concept of body movements and with ethnic dance vocabularies. Tsai and her cooperation with other choreographers in creating *The Obsession of Mandala* (2000), *Meditation Through the Flower I* (2006) and *Meditation Through the Flower II* (2010) can be considered as the three important works of her serious of Religious Dance as well as New Ethnic Aesthetic.

[55] Instead of using the terminology of body-mind-soul which his popular in the oriental body aesthetic in Taiwan, Tsai use the term meaning/thought/mind-image as the third aspects. But no matter the term, I suggest that we can still consider "New Ethnic Aesthetic" as part of the raising of oriental philosophy in dance creations, in which the mind-body connection is highlighted.

or Taiwanese body aesthetics with modern and contemporary dance techniques.

Taking *Life-Long Companionship* (2007) as an example, in which different approaches employed by four choreographers to create dances in the direction of New Ethnic Aesthetics. This production focused on the female perspective on critiquing the patriarchal system in traditional marriages and each piece takes one of the different ethnic groups in Taiwan as its theme and context: the Hoklo, the Hakka, and the indigenous Taiwanese. The unequal relationship between females and males and the negotiations and the resistances of Taiwanese women has been investigated and expressed in Taiwanese modern dance creations.[56]Traditional Chinese cultural symbols and movements are often employed to represent the bounded "tradition" and then frequently deconstructed and broken down with contemporary dance expressions and vocabularies. *Life-Long Companionship* is one of the few dance productions by a folk dance company to explore this topic.

The works of the New Ethnic Aesthetic may appear too "modern" to be considered as a "traditional" dance work because of its flowing quality, its composed narratives, and its

[56] The theme of traditional marriage and the struggles of women are often choreographed by modern dance company. For example, Cloud Gate Dance Theater, *Portrait of the Families*(1997); Asian American dance company H.T. Chen and Dancers, *Double Happiness, One Hundred Sorrows (1992).*

resistance to traditional cultural values, which are all quite distant from the "authentic" classical and folk dance styles and narratives believed to be remnants from the past. The works of the New Ethnic Aesthetic may also be too "traditional" to be considered as a "modern" dance piece, because its adherence to the classical circular movement principle, religious connections, and spiritual fantasy are unfit for the rebellious spirit and deconstructive goals that some of modern or post-modern dance claims. In other words, these dance productions of the New Ethnic Aesthetic can hardly be categorized into one category or the other, especially when the boundary is either undefined or ambiguous.

Choreography aligned with the New Ethnic Aesthetic could be seen as contemporary works that interpret traditional dance materials with present-day concerns about social and religious issues, while also exploring the possibilities of the reflective dancing body. By raising awareness of the New Ethnic Aesthetic, Tsai highlights the connection between the mind and the body in the creations of "traditional" dance and decreases the conventional methods of displaying dance techniques simply for the purpose of spectacle. This does not mean that Tsai abandons the classical aesthetic of "traditional" dance that pursues "beautiful" scenarios; rather, she creates her idealized movement and reveals the spiritual atmosphere in her New Ethnic Aesthetic. This allows her to employ contemporary

concepts of choreographing, training and performing in order to approach a utopic vision of dance. Whether presenting a critique of traditional marriage or a praise of a pure spiritual world, these performances expose their contemporary spirit with their transformation of traditional materials.

Tsai's nostalgia for the Taiwanese folk dance does not fixate her choreographic work on the authority of the past, but rather reflectively brings her artistic direction towards exploring various possible combinations of the "traditional" with contemporary expressions. The New Ethnic Aesthetic highlights a creativity and innovation for reinterpreting and choreographing traditional and folk dance symbols, narratives, and movements. This new direction indicates the possibility for "traditional" dance to be choreographically creative, something which was previously denied. Tsai's proposal and promotion, consciously or unconsciously, challenges the modernists' presumption perceiving the Eastern body aesthetic as simply "cultured," "historicized," and "traditional." Yet, my discussion on the struggles to offer "traditional" dance an innovating space does not ignore that there is always a need for Tsai, as an Asian artist, to consciously position herself and to claim her artistic works as "traditional" thus to emphasize its value as part of cultural continuity, especially in the encountering with outsiders in the

international context, which will be further addressed.

## II. Constructing a local "Taiwan-ness" to Compete for International Visibility

### 1. Awaken in the Celebration of Cultural Difference in International Festivals

It is through the viewpoint and confirmation from foreigners that Tsai ensures her artistic direction on local and "native" Taiwanese dance instead of the performances learned from China. In 1989, right after the project of "The Night of Folk Arts," the Taipei Folk Dance Theater toured Europe, and won prizes in the Roodepoort International Eisteddfod of South Africa (RIESA).[57] In one of Tsai's articles narrating the history of the TFDT,[58] she quotes the judge of the international dance competition as saying, "You, Taiwanese people, have your own dance which is touching and lucid, such as *Jump Drum Array* and *Harvest Festival*. Why do you need to perform the Chinese Ballet piece from China, such as *Flower Drum Lantern*?" Tsai argues that these words had a great impact on her and confirmed her direction of the TFDT to put her efforts into the research and choreography of Taiwanese folk dance from local practices.

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[57] Tsai, "Twenty Years Taipei Folk Dance Theater."

[58] Ibid.

In his discussion of the visible globalization of the local, Arif Dirlik indicates how the local is made for global circulations.[59] He suggests that globality is a utopian commodity that is announced by globalists, while the global itself, in fact, requires local difference to maintain its globality. His argument points out that "the global cannot exist without the local." [60] Similarly, Arjun Appadurai's discusses how "the eye of anthropology" contributes to the cultural aspects of globalization, in which the "situated and embodied difference" has to be staged.[61] He points out that how the anthropological mode to seek the (cultural, ethnic, or class) difference is a formulation of group identity in the encountering with others. Both of their arguments indicate that international dance festivals are held to promote a sense of a colorful globalized world by asking the most "native" performers to do dances that signify the cultural difference, in which the performing group from Taiwan should be distinguishable from those from China.

Also, the TFDT may take on the responsibility of "cultural diplomacy" for the (unnamed) nation-state of Taiwan, not unlike the previous amateur Chinese Min-Zu dance

[59] Arif Dirlik. Place-Based Imagination: Globalism and the Politics of Place. In R. Prazniak and A. Dirlik *Places and Politics in an Age of Globalization*, 2001, Lanhan: Rowman & Littlefield, pp.15-51.

[60] Arif Dirlik. Place-Based Imagination: Globalism and the Politics of Place. In R. Prazniak and A. Dirlik *Places and Politics in an Age of Globalization*, 2001, Lanhan: Rowman & Littlefield. P29.

[61] Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at large : cultural dimensions of globalization*, Public worlds (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996). P11-13.

companies or the semi-official Chinese Goodwill Mission. However, there is a difference in terms of its artistic standard on the qualification of "professional," which indicates that its goal is not simply to assist the Taiwanese government in maintaining its connections with overseas Chinese communities, but more importantly, to represent the artistic achievements of the "traditional" culture of Taiwan as a member of the global dance community. The awards won at the international world dance competition are important recognition to the artistic achievement of the Taipei Folk Dance Theater, and represent how a Taiwanese choreographer values and positions her creations beside the diplomatic concerns of the state. The TFDT won awards at several international dance festivals, such as the Roodepoort International Eisteddfod of South Africa (RIESA), the Forty-Fourth International Dance Festival in Dijon, France, and the Festival International Chateauneuf du Faou. These awards not only built up the reputation of the TFDT as the representatives of Taiwanese folk culture, but also confirmed its artistic achievements that choreographers look for.

It is also undeniable that Taiwanese choreographers' desire to be included in the celebration of global culture is tied to Taiwan's anxiety to be recognized as a member of the political entity known as the R.O.C. in Taiwan. In other words, the desire to possess

authority over certain "traditions" that can be claimed as Taiwanese is also motivated by the fear of being ignored in the mapping of global geopolitics. The international dance festivals provide occasions to represent the "cultural" aspects of ethnicity and visualize the existence of Taiwanese people. From the recognition of other's gaze to the self-affirmation of local value, TFDT dances from the local Taiwanese stage to an international one. Tsai's nostalgia for the folk performances of her childhood blends with her and the nation-state's desire for a unique Taiwanese cultural identity and longing to be included into the celebration of a colorful world.

### 2. Dancing in-between Nationalisms: Taiwanese Dance and/or Chinese Dance

The staging of "traditional" and folk dance is often conceived as a representation of national identity. The staging of Taiwanese folk dance is further a complicated situation in terms of which national identity is embodied. Considering the repertoires of TFDT in the debates of Taiwanese identity, Tsai's strategy allows her to navigate the debates of Taiwanese subjectivity, ranging from Taiwanese nationalism, Chinese nationalism, to cultural China and world culture at large, while also positioning herself as the most localized Taiwanese choreographer. In other words, the locality resided in the folk culture of Taiwan that she claims is a strategic position that can be interpreted appropriately

according to different contexts.

As I discussed in chapter one, the construction of Chinese-ness and Chinese nationalism claims to include and homogenize different cultural practices under the bigger umbrella of Chinese. I also show how Taiwanese people have tied to the mapping of ethnic Chinese but in a marginal position, compared to "authentic" Chinese people in China. TFDT's dance works stand in a firm location of Taiwan and allow it to be included into the broader concept of ethnic and/or national Chinese culture, depending on whose perspective. The position of being Chinese-but-not-yet-Chinese also offers the currency to construct a localized and fluid identity and to claim a difference in geopolitical contexts while simultaneously sharing interests in Chinese culture. It is this ambivalent relationship with China as the origin of cultural authority and the ambiguous position of Taiwanese people as marginal but localized (ethnic) Chinese diaspora in Taiwan that allow Tsai and TFDT to gain their vision and space for survival.

Chinese studies scholars, Ien Ang and Shu-Mei Shih, both propose other possibilities to try and decentralize the root from China and offer critiques of Tu's concept of "Culture China."[62] Ang emphasizes the political power of periphery and argues that the uneasiness

[62] We-Ming Tu critiques the concept of a Chinese diaspora that reasserts Chinese nationalism, instead arguing

and distance keeps intellectuals aware of the illusive desire of "cultural China." She draws from Leo Qu-fan Lee's arguments that explain the position of marginality has the potential of "allowing one to subject the obsession itself to artistic treatment"[63] thus giving Chinese intellectuals a reflective space to destabilize the homogenized concept of Chinese-ness. Similarly, Shu-Mei Shih, in arguing to use "Sinophone" to replace the term "Chinese" to recognize the value of these cultural practices developed outside of China, suggests that "Sinophone articulations can take as many different positions as possible within the realm of human expression, whose axiological determinations are not necessarily dictated by China but by local, regional, or global contingencies and desires."[64] In other words, she proposes the possibility of deconstructing Chinese-centrism by recognizing local practices as the potential space of resistance for the marginal group. As a result, when considering Taiwanese people's "inauthenticity" in relation to all "Chinese" cultural representation, the staging of local Taiwanese cultural practices, however, are originated from China, which

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for "the shifting of depoliticized humanism and roots-researching in the discourses of cultural China" (30). Although his argument confirms the potential space for inauthentic overseas Chinese, his concept of cultural China reaffirms Mainland China as the root of overseas Chinese without questioning the danger of long-distance Chinese nationalism. For detail discussion, please see Chapter One.

[63] Ien Ang, *On not speaking Chinese : living between Asia and the West* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2001). 43

[64] Shumei Shi, *Visuality and identity : Sinophone articulations across the Pacific*, Asia Pacific modern (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007). 30.

highlights its locality as a political position.

Inside Taiwan, both Chinese nationalism and Taiwanese nationalism are raised as the two ends of the political debates between "reunion" and "independent" in deciding the future of Taiwanese people. From a Chinese nationalist' perspective, Tsai's showing of Taiwanese folk performances may be seen as part of the culture of Han people, whose origins can be traced back to South-eastern China, and thus the common cultural origin of these different folk performances can be emphasized to meet the foundational claim of Chinese nationalism. Similar interpretation may be held by Chinese audience in China, when TFDT performs in cross-strait cultural exchange programs, in which TFDT showcase with other Chinese performing groups. The local difference of Taiwanese performance constitutes to the imagination of a colorful and big Chinese community, in which the aspects of "the same culture and the same race"[65] are highlighted.

On the contrary, as I discussed in Chapter Two, the constructing of Taiwanese subjectivity and the extreme political claim of Taiwanese nationalism, which dangerously led to Hoklo-centralism in suggesting a homogenous Taiwanese culture, both emphasized

[65] Chinese audiences often emphasize Taiwanese people as "the same culture, the same race" and therefore definitely the same nation-state with Chinese people in China. For the different interpretations of the same program between Chinese audience and Taiwanese audience, please see Chao's research on the could gate dance theater 's Legacy.

the localization of cultural representation in the location of Taiwan. TFDT's Taiwanese folk performances can also fulfill the fantasy of Hoklo nativists and supporters because of the locality. Dance scholar Anthony Shay, in his discussion on state folk dance ensemble, points out, the process of choreography is a series of selections that decided what is included and what is excluded, with the purpose of "representing the nation 'properly'"(p29, emphasize by Shay). Similar but slightly different, Tsai, by staging her transformations of local Taiwanese performances to represent different ethnic groups in Taiwan, gains her visibility to be considered as proper ethnic and folk cultural performances, no matter which nationalities her works may be interpreted to fit into.

Take Tsai's *Pilgrimage* for example, the Taiwanese folk dance production that is based on the Ma-Zu religion in Taiwan. While the narrative of Ma-Zu is often used by Taiwanese nationalism to proclaim the concept that the motherland is here-in-Taiwan rather than there-in-China, Ma-Zu's ties to China are also held by Chinese nationalists as evidence of a kinship relationship between Taiwanese and Chinese. Combining with local Taiwanese folk performances and Ma-Zu religious practices, *Pilgrimage* met the objectives of a Taiwanese national identity to express the local culture and activities of Taiwan. At the same time, it also fulfilled the expectations of Chinese nationalism to

express a Chinese cultural continuity in Taiwan. Tsai's Taiwanese dance can be read as a representation of Taiwan, as a location or as a national community, as well as a local representation of Taiwan that can be included under the umbrella concept of Chinese-ness.

Tsai's *Pilgrimage* is also a cultural representation of the "local" that can be uneasily included within, and maybe therefore challenges, the imagination of cultural China in Tu's concept that still posited China as the center and Taiwan as a periphery. Ma-Zu, the Ocean Goddess, and her traveling status signify the multiple routes of Chinese diaspora and the immigrant experiences of the overseas Chinese, which are not a singular mode of center the periphery can cover. The narratives of traveling and migration not only express a story of departure from a homeland and the last arrival location, but also a rare reminiscence of the physical experience of arriving a new location, choosing to stay or to leave, and finally establishing residence in a new homeland. The deepened level of Ma-Zu religious meaning could be interpreted both in a sense of diaspora and of multiple immigrations and in a process of localized residency in the location of arrival.

The choreography of *Pilgrimage* is tied to a subject position that is culturally and corporeally settled in Taiwan. *Pilgrimage* displays the Taiwanese people's sentimental connection to, and physical memory, of the Ma-Zu pilgrimage in Taiwan, which is not

simply a replication of Ma-Zu religious activities in China. The Ma-Zu pilgrimage, as an annual tracking among different temples inside Taiwan, should be considered an innovative creation expressing local longings for roots in Taiwan rather than simply a longing for a return to its origin in China. From this perspective, Tsai's *Pilgrimage* offers a standing point for Taiwanese cultural expressions.

Therefore, holding the local memory and cultural practices of Taiwan, Tsai insists on highlighting the value and features of the locals, rather than simply homogenizing them under the rubric of Chinese culture. In other words, she resides in the marginal position of Taiwanese local culture with artistic creations and strategically responds to, and balances, the need for local visibility in Taiwan and in China as well as the global market in overseas Chinese communities and international festivals. At the heart of her implementation and her assertion on staging the "most" local cultural practices of Taiwan in her dance productions, Tsai strategically alters not simply to escape the debates on Taiwanese identity but instead to benefit from multiple nationalism(s). The "local" difference is the basis that allows her to perform and to communicate through dynamic identity politics and power relationships inside and outside Taiwan.

### 3. Performing the "Traditional": Longing to be Included into the "World"

When TFDT is programmed to tour, whether at "international" folk dance festivals or at Chinese or Taiwanese cultural events, the company's "genuine" representations of the folk culture of Taiwan is highlighted while its innovations and re-conceptualizations of the "traditional" remain concealed. Because of the emphasis on the dance traditions of different ethnicities and nationalities in these international cultural encounters, TFDT often includes its most "authentic" and "traditional" repertoires in order to present its characteristic "Taiwan-ness" to the audiences who may or may not be familiar with Taiwan. Moreover, TFDT generally excludes its more contemporary-looking works, especially those from the category of the New Ethnic Aesthetic, on its international tours[66]. The need to attach one's nationality to proper "traditional" dances in these so-called cross cultural appreciation events is produced by both the self-positioning of the company in terms of what a Taiwanese folk dance company should present, and of the implicit goal attached in the very invitation for the company to perform at international folk festivals, and Chinese and Taiwanese cultural events.

Since its residence and local connection in Taiwan, TFDT steps into the niche of

[66] Although Tsai explained in an interview that these productions require more money due to stage settings, dancers, and costumes (therefore making it difficult to perform them on international tours), I argue that the preferences of these international festivals should be considered here.

"traditional" folk performance of Taiwan that both meets political purposes of Taiwanese nationalism and benefits the company economically in operating this dance company. Like other dance companies in Taiwan, TFDT relies on state funding and its international tours are often arranged by Taiwanese diplomatic organizations. Therefore, its international tours unavoidably bear the responsibility to stage the existence of Taiwan on global stages. Only the "traditional"-looking dance pieces are proper to perform the culture of "Taiwan" for political and cultural visibility internationally.

Dance scholar Mata Savigliano, in discussing the concept of "worlding dance" as part of globalizing local cultures, suggests that when non-western, traditional dance practices are welcomed to be included into the category of "world dance", these authentic, rooted, practices have to be removed from the locations onto global stages in which a "loss-in-translation" often happen[67]. Similarly, the staging of folk performances and of Arts Parades in Taiwan may remind the audience of the closeness of interpersonal relationships in agricultural society that used to characterize the people of Taiwan. It may also provide a chance for those in the Taiwanese diaspora to recollect their childhood

[67] Marta Elena Savigliano, "Worlding Dance and Dancing Out There in the World," in *Worlding Dance*, ed. Susan L. Foster (Basingstoke : Palgrave Macmillan: 2009). 181.

memories of Taiwan and to feed their nostalgic longings while in a land outside their hometown. However, the touring of these folk performances for global audiences may also create a sense of exoticism providing little information about local culture in Taiwan. In other words, these folk performances that are travel across borders may simply become a temporarily vivid scenario suitable for global consumption.

Also, the desire to stage "Happy Folks", a cosmopolitan's nostalgia to recreate the sense of a warm community and to connect with each other regardless of one's ethnicity and nationality, is further articulated and circulated, rather than diminished, in this era of rapid technological development. By the same means, the performance of the "folk," of "ethnicity," and of "nationality" must be portrayed in a way that is distinct from "modern" dance, which is read as westernized, in order to be recognized as a valuable source of cultural continuity and celebrate a colorful globality. Yet, the longing for an ideal life of "Happy Folks" is not simply an anti-modern move; rather, it is part of a modernist project drafted by different groups of cultural elites in an urban area. Social and cultural historian Daniel J. Walkowitz, in his book *City Folk: English Country Dance and the Politics of the Folk in Modern American*, traces the revivals of English folk dance in the United States and

argues for examination of the concept of "folk modernism."[68] He suggests that "the folk [i]s rooted in a local culture with its own political resonance."[69] Accordingly, although TFDT mounts new works in Taiwan, they strategically stage "traditional" works inside but especially outside Taiwan and therefore fulfill both the need for Taiwanese contemporary folk dance to move forward and the desire to hold on to a sense of "authentic" cultural continuity against the fragments of modern society.

Positioned in an idealized utopic image of International folk in which everyone dances happily together to celebrate the colors of "world" culture, TFDT unavoidably constructs its self both with a concern for its roots in Taiwan and with a global market in mind. With global capital rapidly flowing through Taiwan, TFDT's folk performances, which draw from the embodied experiences of the people of Taiwan, are grounded in Taiwan as their locations that cannot easily be homogenized through globalization. Meanwhile, its global visibility increases by containing and fitting itself into the category of "traditional" Asian dance at large. When a choreographic work of Asian descent or from Asia claims to be folk or ethnic, it is often immediately considered to be "cultural" and

[68] Daniel J. Walkowitz, *City folk : English country dance and the politics of the folk in modern America*, NYU series in social and cultural analysis (New York: New York University Press, 2010).

[69] Ibid. 4.

therefore “traditional” and to is categorized as “world culture,” instead of being regarded as a contemporary and autonomous art.

Dance Scholar Lena Hammergren examines the concept of “bodyscapes” (which draws from Arjun Appadurai and was first proposed by Paula Saukko) in Indian dance in Sweden and argues that the dancing body can only be temporarily contained and may challenge seemingly stable classifications, in which the definitions of Sweden and of India are shifting with the times.[70] Struggling with the division set between the “traditional” and the “modern” inside and outside Taiwan, Tsai holds her Taiwanese folk dance repertoires, on the one hand, to demonstrate the value in “traditional” culture that audiences may seek in coming to a folk dance performance, but also, on the other hand, keeps creating a space for her and her followers to invent contemporary interpretations and fusions looking to create new artistic directions for the future. Without revealing the innovations they make to Taiwanese folk dance too much, TFDT works on being included in the category of “world dance” in order to gain global visibility, a position for which Taiwanese choreographers constantly strive.

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[70] Lena Hammergren, " *The Power of Classification*," in *Worlding Dance*, ed. Susan L. Foster (Basingstoke : Palgrave Macmillan: 2009).

# Chapter IV

# Body-Based Nostalgia in the Local/Global Configuration: Legend Lin Dance Theater's *Jiao*

## Section One: Lee-Chen Lin and Her Search for the "Eastern" Body

In this section, I trace Lee-Chen Lin's background from her youth as a choreographer and dance teacher to her work as an interdisciplinary artist for different theater, film and dance groups, and finally to her building of Legend Lin Dance Theater (LLDT) in 1995. Examining her past work experiences, I pay attention to her interests in her memories and life experiences from her childhood and to her attachment to community based cultural practices. Her preference for eastern philosophy and Indigenous spirituality contributes to her search for, and construction of, a non-western body. Situating Lin's intentions in the larger context of Taiwanese and of Asian artists at large who struggle to be recognized globally (though especially in the Euro-American world) and to claim their autonomy over their creations, I examine how Lin's claim to "return" to "the origin" of the body is not simply a way of positioning herself as a Taiwanese choreographer but is also a reflection on the theorization and re-conceptualization of one's own body, in which her nostalgic searching gives her the credit and resources to make her creations.

### I. Dancing across Fields: Lee-Chen Lin's Creations before 1995

Lee-Chen Lin, the creator of Legend Lin Dance Theater, was a notable choreographer in her early professional dance career. Lin graduated from the dance and

music program at Chinese Culture University (PCCU), the only dance program in higher education in Taiwan at that time. Prior her entrance to the dance program, Lin studied dance at a local studio and also took some classes from Shi-Twuan Lin, one of the few earlier Taiwanese dance teachers who emphasized creativity and improvisation in her dance pedagogy. Later in 1967, Lin also enrolled in American modern dancer Eleanor King's workshop in Taipei, which broadened her vision of choreography[1]. These experiences, which emphasized the freedom of dance creation, have had an impact on Lee-Chen Lin's artistic process and show their influences later on in Lin's attitudes toward dancing and teaching. During her study at PCCU, she developed her choreographic abilities. She presented several of her works in dance concerts at PCCU as an undergraduate student, and gained attention and encouragement from her classmates and teachers. The dance program at PCCU at that time provided dance training in ballet, modern, and Chinese dance, while the concept of choreography and creation was mostly limited to presentations falling within the category of modern and contemporary dance. As a result, Lin's creations during her undergraduate years are often seen as mainly composed of (American-influenced) modern dance pieces, much like other Taiwanese choreographers at that time.

Lin won several First Place Awards in the category of Chinese Modern Dance in the annual Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance Competitions from 1973 to 1977. In her five years of teaching in school, she was well known for her ability to create an affecting atmosphere

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[1] Eleanor King was invited to give a lecture and workshops in Taiwan. Lin joined her workshop and felt inspired. Yi Liu, "Dance.Lin Lee-Chen," *Lion Youth Journal* (1978). 143.

in her arrangements, scenarios, and movements, even when choreographing for a large cast. Lin held a full-time teaching position at the Changan Junior high school and her main task, besides teaching physical education classes, was to choreograph modern dance pieces and to train these students as dancers to participate in Chinese *Min-Zu* Dance Competitions. Several of her award-winning pieces, such as *Swim toward Freedom* and *Brave the Winds and the Waves*, employed big cloths to symbolically create the waves of the ocean, and narrated the struggles and solidarity of people[2]. Another of her award-winning choreographies is *Kazakhs' Mosque*, which was inspired by her archival research examining the photos and history of Muslim ethnic minorities in Northwest China, and which combines movements created from improvisational exercises by students[3]. As a regular award-winner in national dance competitions, Lin built up her reputation as a prominent choreographer. Later, Lin also received accolades and enthusiastic feedback for her first dance concert "Do Not Forget Your Umbrella" (1978), in which she presented the works *Do Not Forget Your Umbrella*, *Dapeng*[4]*and Me*, and *Heavenly Questions*, and also received recognition for her choreography *Swallow* (1982), which was performed in the "Seven-One Dance Concert.[5]"

Lin took a hiatus from her professional dance career during 1982-1995 but

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[2] Ibid.. P144

[3] Ibid. P144

[4] "Dapeng" is a Giant bird has huge size of wings and flying powet. It is a mythic creature in Chinese mythology.

[5] This dance concert was held and sponsored by The Ministry of Education and invited several young and rising choreographers to present their new works. The "Seven-One" is a reference to the Seventy-First year of R.O.C.(1982)

occasionally worked as a collaborative artist across different artistic fields and was involved in various artistic productions. She announced her departure from choreography in order to "return" to her family as a mother and wife in 1982, a year marked by the cessation of a dance concert that would have presented her new works. The dance concert was not held due to a generally unsupportive attitude from the schools where her dancers studied and a lack of funding. Instead she devoted her time and energy to her family and it was not until the late 1980s that she started to participate as an associated artist in several creative productions for theater performances, dance groups, and films. In these collaborations, in addition to working as a choreographer and dance teacher, she also worked frequently as a costume designer[6]. In other words, Lin also has a sharp sense and talent for design and for visual effects. These artistic collaborations not only demonstrate her ability to work across artistic fields but also to broaden her experiences and connections with other artists that would contribute to her later creations.

Parallel artistic dialogues appear when examining her collaboration with the remarkable Lan-Ling Theatre Workshop and her later contribution to the U theater. As I mentioned in the previous section on the Taiwanese Little Theater movement, Lan-Ling Theater Workshop was one of experimental theatre troupe that shifted its focus from spoken drama, which primarily emphasized text, in order to re-conceptualize different elements of theater as well as the human body as a means for expressing real life in Taiwan. Lee-Chen Lin was invited to work with one of their directors, Ming Churk, and

[6] Lin had designed theater costume for several performing groups, such as the U theater and Taipei Folk Dance Theater.

to teach and experiment with actors about the possibilities of integrating movements, music, and texts in a musical form[7]. Lin introduced the actors to dance improvisation exercises and choreographed for their theatrical works.

Her cross-fields artistic contributions continued through her later cooperation with the U theater, which was directed by Ching-Min Liu, one of the previous members of the Lang-Ling theater workshop. As I mentioned in the previous sections on the Little Theater Movement and the Baishatun Ma-Zu pilgrimage, U theater largely relied on the ethnographic research of folklore to develop its aesthetics of the body and performance style in its early stage works. Lin was invited to design costumes for one of U theater's productions and maintained a close friendship with their actors. For example, Chong-Leong Wu, a former U theater member and later the creator of Sun Son Theatre, participated in the international tour of Lin's work *Anthem to Fading Flowers*[8]. Lin's artistic relationships initiated creative dialogues among theater and dance artists. The diverse views on Taiwanese and/or Eastern body aesthetics and of ritual theater have generally developed in Taiwanese artistic community.

Lee-Chen Lin gradually returned to the dance world with her contributions and presentations of several choreographic works in the early 1990s. Firstly, she was invited by choreographer Li-Hua Tsai to design costumes for Tsai's choreography *Homage to the*

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[7] Lin clarifies that as their dance teacher, she helped the actors with their training but was also invited to choreograph and integrate movements into their musical and theatrical pieces. Lee-Chen Lin. Personal Interview. September, 2010.

[8] In an interview, Lin explains that Huang was previously her student in LanLing Theater and wanted to participate in her dance piece to gain more learning and stage experience. Lee-Chen Lin. Personal Interview. September, 2010.

*Gods* (1980) and later Lin choreographed *Worship to Heaven* (1989) for the Taipei Folk Dance Theater. Tsai also invited Lin to choreograph several pieces for the Chinese Goodwill Youth Mission, when Tsai was its artistic director. Lin choreographed *The Tone of Tang Dynasty* in 1991 and *Love Songs in the Tea Garden* in 1992[9]. *The Tone of the Tang Dynasty* was created in a classical dance style that depicted a beautiful woman and her female servants as they move on a boat and dance during the reign of the Tang Dynasty of China, a historical period often evoked by Taiwanese artists to allude to an imagined classical period. In the first and last scene on the boat, Lin uses some lightweight yarn on sticks for support to create the outline of a square surrounding the beautiful woman, and shifts the space to symbolize the changing directions of the boat and of the beauty inside it. Lin's slow-moving aesthetic, accompanied by the shifting relationships between the dancers, creates a rich scenario through which Lin investigates the theme of transformation. According to dance scholar Lan-Lan Mo's master thesis on Legend Lin Dance Theater, Lin's previous dancer Qiu-Yue Yu considered this piece a precursor to Lin's later chorographic approach to *Jiao*[10]. Lin later also restaged her previous modern dance piece *Swallow* for the Chinese Goodwill Youth Mission in 1992 and in 1995.

Lee-Chen Lin was also invited as choreographer (with Li-Guo Ming as producer and Kan-Ping Yu as artistic director) for the project *Indigenous Music and Dance: Bu-Nun* in

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[9] From the program and video of the Chinese Goodwill Youth Mission. Legend Lin Dance Theater archive. (unpublished)

[10] Lan-Lan Mo, "The Theatre Performance of Metempsychosis Phantasma: The Analysis of the Footwork Aesthetics of the Legend Lin Dance Theater" (Taiwan University of Arts, 2009).

1991. This project was produced by Taiwan's National Theater as part of the series "Indigenous Music and Dance" that staged ritual performances featuring the culture of a different Indigenous People of Taiwan each year. This series was held annually for four years. Different from previous appropriations, this series invited Indigenous Peoples themselves to stage cultural and ritual performances (rituals that are still practiced in communities) inside the theater with the assistance of artists and scholars, such as the ethnomusicologist Li-Guo Ming who has researched Taiwanese aboriginal music extensively. Lin was invited to choreograph, rearrange and stage some of these "original" ritual performances for a theater audience. With an interest in theatricality for audiences, Lin choreographed several different rituals from various villages of Bu-Non to be presented in one program with a narrative threaded throughout the whole piece. Lin was fascinated and deeply impressed by the spirituality, the energy, and the close connection among the members in the Indigenous performances[11]. The friendships she made with Indigenous Peoples of Taiwan on this project, as well as her own impressions of this experience contribute to her later concept of considering and managing her own dance company as a "tribe,"[12] which she sees as a tight connected community.

However, according to Li-Guo Ming's critique, Lin's choreography misinterpreted and misrepresented Bu-Non rituals and the original meanings of their cultural context[13].

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[11] . Lee-Chen Lin. Personal Interview. Sep, 2010.

[12] Nien-Chou Chen. Personal interview. March, 2011

[13] Li-Guo Ming's explanation in the article "Between the Mountain and the Hains" and states that "when you bring aboriginal dance to the stage, you must first deeply understand and respect the overall cultural backgroun." (91).Wen-ting Tsai, "Between the Mountain and the Hains," *Sinorama* (January,1992)..

According to the video "Indigenous Music and Dance: Bu-Nun"[14], this performance intended to narrate several rituals with their particular songs and dances into a linear epic. However, although the props used on stage (such as the live hunting dog and fake animal dolls) allude to the context of a hunting festival, these strategies failed to construct a sacred meeting ground for a non-Indigenous audience to appreciate the ritual performances they watched. Nor did Lin "understand" the ritual effect of these performances as enactments in the beliefs and cultures of different Bu-Nun communities. Li-Guo Ming's primary goal for the cultural performances of Taiwanese Indigenous rituals staged in the National Theater was to raise the audience's awareness of these cultural treasures and encourage audiences to visit their resident villages in order to understand and appreciate these original rituals and to help improve the economy of these villages. Lee-Chen Lin's primary concern was to present the spirit and the energy of these ritual performances she found so fascinating to an audience while staging them in a different cultural context. I would like to argue that these debates and conflicts are not simply related to Lin's representational aesthetics nor her approaches from the Han majority's artistic perspective, but are also largely associated with the underlying tension of bringing Indigenous ritual performance to the stage, a practice that swings between two extremes of attempting to construct either an authentic "representation" or of an artistic "creation."

In tracing her collaborations throughout different artistic projects, I suggest that that Lin deepened her interests in investigating and appreciating both Taiwanese folk

[14] Video tape, *Indigenous Music and Dance: Bu-Nun,* Legend Lin Dance Theater archive. (unpublished)

culture and Indigenous ritual practices, especially in the 1980s and the1990s. Lin's talent for drawing her ideas from "original" folk arts to create artistic works in an innovating manner can be observed in these early collaborations as well as her later choreographic projects. On the one hand, she feels emotionally attached to the local culture of Taiwan and puts great effort into deepening her understanding of its practices and beliefs. On the other hand, she detaches the principles and main elements of these local cultural practices and transforms them into artistic expressions (without intending them to be "authentic") and choreographs creations that can satisfy the tastes of theater audiences.

## II. Lee-Chen Lin's "Eastern" Training System

Before analyzing Lin's choreography *Jiao* in the next section, I will discuss her construction of a highly specific body training system and her interest in an "Eastern" body aesthetic, both of which inform her choreographic strategies and construct her most memorable movements. Lin has expressed her desire to return to a basic, original, and non-westernized body ever since the beginning of LLDT in 1995. Different from her early western dance training, Lin "invented" her own bodily training system that focused on the movements of the spine and the Core of the body through a series of basic physical exercises. Several popular narratives and texts about Lin and LLDT emphasize that "Lin created her own innovative aesthetic"[15]. In this sense, she asserts that only through reconnecting and reinvestigating one's own body can one find one's most proper ways of

[15] Legend Lin Dance Theater Websites, introduction notes in the programs, the introduction of artist in the National Artist award 2005.

moving. The Taiwanese "original" body is supposed to be a "non-westernized" body and cannot portray a Westernized dance aesthetic. Accordingly, in order to reflect this original Taiwanese body, contemporary Taiwanese dancers must be retrained in specific Eastern methodologies.

Lin's five major subjects of her philosophy of the body are "Silence, Settle, Loosen, *Chen* (Profound), *Huan* (Slowness)" and can be extended to a sixth subject "Strength"[16]. These important concepts are the foundation of her unique body aesthetic and philosophy, which re-conceptualizes the ideal dancing body. Lin's training methods are designed according to these principles in order to enhance both mental and physical practices. The first five subjects are closely related to each other and are also the five stages that the dancing body follows to deepen its ability to move. For example, only when one enters a state of "Silence" can she or he can "Settle" both mind and body and "Loosen" any corporeal tension. After one "Loosens" all the joints and muscles of the body as well as all the barriers in mind, one can "*Chen*" (deepen) one's weight into the ground and gain a profound base and origin of power. From this place, the very slow but stable motion of "*Huan*" can be unfold and it can also generate a very fast, powerful, and forceful movement of "Strength." These concepts form the basis of Lin's main body aesthetics and all the LLDT's dance productions highly rely on them.

I do not translate the word *Huan* in my discussion because this concept does not simply mean "slow" but is more nuanced, also meaning to "delay, postpone, and

[16] In 2011 SDHS conference , I discuss these translation with other presenter Zi-TingChen. She uses "Immersion" to translate the concept of *Chen*, which may be translated as "Sinking" in other texts. However, I interpret this concept as being closer to "Deepening" and "Profound," in which both the body and the mind are grounded into a firm base from where one can take action.

revive"[17]. "*Huan* Walking," is the most notable, characteristic, and recurring transitional movement in Lin's choreography. . Dancers move in extreme slow motion and concentrate on the Core of the body as their feet glide along the floor and with their eyes slightly opened. Most critics praise this part of Lin's choreographic style, calling it her "Walking Aesthetic[18]". In Lin's workshops and rehearsals, "*Huan* Walking" is an exercise that students practice in every class. Recognizing the significant beauty of this highly particular "walking", I decided to further examine several of Lin's physical exercises in order to analyze the construction of her bodily aesthetic, which explores not simply the fantastic feeling of the movement but, more importantly, the efforts she makes to seek her "ideal" body.

For a further investigation on Lee-Chen Lin's training methods, I participated in her three-month workshop designed for non-dancers and taught by one of Lin's premier dancers, Bi-Jue Tsai, in the summer of 2010. Although the sequences of movements in the workshop were at a basic level, the dancers explained that they all practice these movements in their rehearsal classes[19] as well as other movement sequences derived from these basic exercises. To understand the part of the dancers' training that I have not had the chance to learn or experience, I rely on the narratives from my interviews with the dancers and two articles focusing on Lin's training system, written by some of Lin's

[17] The difference between slow and *Huan* is emphasized by Lin and her followers. This distinction I make here is very important for my later analysis in which I consider *Huan* as a strategy in response to the fast flows of global capitals.

[18] Lin's "Walking aesthetic" is widely discussed by the articles and dance reviews of Ya-Ping Chen, Mo-Lin Wang, Lan-Lan Mo, and among others.

[19] Interviews with dancers Bi-Jue Tsai, Chien-Wen Cheng, Ming-Jing Wu, Hsiu-Hsia Wu and Lan-Lan Mo.

previous and current dancers. My intension for this discussion on Lin's training system is not to be an exhaustive account, but, instead, to outline some of its important aspects in order to provide a basic understanding of Lin's particular body aesthetics and a context for my later discussion.

## 1. Preparation: Relocating the "Core" of the Body

The environment of the class is set up to be like a place of mediation, similar to some Yoga classes, providing a respectful, concentrated and ritual atmosphere for the practitioners. When one enters the studio, she or he may be quieted down at first by the setting of this space, a darker room only slightly lit. The early comers have moved their mats to their preferred space in the room and do some warm up movements, or may just sit in mediation. Very few people talk to each other and most of the students have learned to concentrate on warming-up leaving the outside world for the serenity of this small room.

### 1.1 Silent Sitting

"Silent Sitting" is believed to be an important exercise to prepare and "awaken" one's body, i.e., to bring awareness to our sensations and our mind. The teacher enters the room in silence except for the muffled sound of ringing from a bell as a sign for beginning. All the students start seated with their eyes-closed. The length of time for "Silent Sitting," is decided by the teacher who, depending on the situation and students in each class, will guide the students to the next stage when it is appropriate to move on. "Silent Sitting" is a practice of meditation exercise that could be found in Taoist, Buddhist, and even Christian religious and spiritual practices. However, the "Silent

Sitting" in Lin's training is mainly used as a concentration exercise in order to prepare for the next sequences in the class without instructing on how one meditates her or his thoughts. The teacher delivers verbal instructions to guide the students to work through their bodies and to pay attention to the "Core" of the body consisting of a Central Circle (the Pelvis), a Central Axis (the Spine), and a Central Point (the Coccyx),[20] as they adjust their bodies.

### 1.2 "Silent Sitting Drum"

"Silent Sitting Drum" is used to settle one's body, with eyes-closed, by releasing the spine in response to the frequency and dynamism of a playing drum. At the end of "Silent Sitting", the assistant drummer starts a series of very small and low-volume sounds by hitting the drum. Responding to the sounds of drumming, the spine moves and produces small circles from the coccyx (the tailbone) up through each vertebra along the vertebral column. The ripples of the spine may start as small circles but can extend into bigger circles depending on each individual's physical state. The idea is to loosen each individual vertebra from the bottom to the top. The teacher instructs us to feel the coccyx firmly grounded as the rest of the spine can be flung or thrown about by an automatic force generated from the Core. The key to this practice is to keep the muscles of the other parts of body, including those muscles along the side of the spine, relaxed and to allow the Core of the body to lead without the influence of outside forces.

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[20] The main concepts of a Central Circle (the Pelvis), a Central Axis (the Spine), and a Central Point (the Coccyx) constitutes Lin's training system. I draw this from my experience in workshop and from Chien-Wen Cheng, "Corporeality: An Introduction to the Body Training of Legend Lin Dance Theater. ( *jiujing roushen:gaishuo wugou wudao juchang de shenti xunlian*) " in *Song of Pensive Beholding*, ed. Wen-Li Lin (Taipei: National Chiang Kai-Shek Cultural Center, 2010). 84-99.

Chien-Wen Cheng, Lin's premier male dancer and teacher, writes about Lin's training methods explaining that, with the accelerating, very fast, and powerful drumming, the energy of the spine can transform, becoming like a whip[21], and may lead the dancers to suddenly rise and even jump away from the floor. However, as a dancer who has other physical trainings engrained in my body, I felt it was very difficult to achieve the sense of being led by the spine enough to generate the supposed spontaneous motions, for which students are asked to keep eyes closed while testing out these possibilities. Only when later I had the chance to see a demonstration from another dancer could I understand what kind of motion the circling of the torso may produce. In discussing Lin's dance in relation to the issue of ritual and theater, dance scholar Chi Fang Chao notices that in the practices of Silent Sitting Drum the dancers develop very similar movements in their semi-"trance" state. With this observation in mind, Chao questions whether the dancers' motions are generated spontaneously through relaxation or produced consciously with control.[22] Although I cannot provide an answer here, I would like to suggest that by frequently practicing these techniques, the dancing body is re-theorized through Lin's philosophies and allows her well-trained dancers construct their interpretations and perceptions according to Lin's body aesthetic.

**2. The Primary Sequences of Training**

There are several choreographed sequences that are quintessential to the training and

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[21] Lin uses the image of whip to describe the spine in my interview. Lee-Chen Lin. Personal Interview. September, 2010. Also in Ibid.p84-99.

[22] Chi-Fang Chao, ""What Bring the Ritual onto the Stage: The Redeemed Aesthetic in Taiwan's Contemporary Ritual-Theater." (*jitan yu wutai hegan? Taiwan dangdai juchang yishi de jiushu meixue*)," *Performing Arts Review*, no. 202 (2009).52-67.

are taught in workshops as well as regularly practiced by Lin's dancers in classes and rehearsals. The basic format of these sequences is first taught on the floor and is later developed and modified in different variations such as standing or facing different directions. All the sequences are aimed at developing "the origin of energies" by articulating every joint of the vertebral column and by practicing leading with the Core. These sequences are first learned slowly (sometimes using eight counts of eight, or sixty-four counts, for a whole sequence) and later each section is repeated but at a much slower tempo in order to teach the students to work thoroughly, to work in-depth, and to sense every minute motion of the body.

**2.1 The First Exercise**

The first exercise is a sequence geared towards sensing every detail of the spine by extending and loosening each part of the vertebral column separately. In the class, our teacher Tsai categorizes the spine into seven major parts in order to give students an idea of the details of its motion. The seven parts in order are the Coccyx, Sacrum, Lumbar spine, Thoracic spine, Shoulder, Cervical spine, and Head. The preparatory position of the first exercise utilizes a loose upper body while in sitting position, keeping the Coccyx strong and firmly rooted in the ground. With the beat of the drum, students straighten the spine in the order of the seven parts, straightening one section at a time, with four counts of eight for each part of the spine to extend. Students hold the highest position for two more counts of eight, and then loosen their spines from the head in reverse order. Arm movements are then added to this sequence as they move from the base to the side and to the top of the body. The motion of the arms however must be led by the movement of the

spine and by continually twisting and circling the limb in its socket. Except when facing the front, this sequence may also be done by spiraling the body toward the right and the left side.

Having trained as a dancer before attending the workshop, this sequence reminded me of a floor exercise from Marta Graham's technique. However, the more I practiced this slow sequence, the more I understood its basic function, and its purpose is very different from the focus of Martha Graham's technique. Because Lin's training emphasizes the loosening of the muscles along the spine and the details of each movement in a very slow but continually mobile path, I can spend more time focusing on the spine itself without creating muscle tension but with a sense of regeneration and circulation that becomes more and more understandable to my body. Although the Graham style of training in Taiwan may be different than it is in the United States, its fundamental movements— contraction and release— still rely heavily on the stimulation of the whole body, bones and muscles, in order to create this movement aesthetic. In other words, Lin's training is closer to Taoist notions of circularity than Graham technique though admittedly, Lin's exercises for the spine may be informed by her previous training in modern dance. In other words, both eastern and western training systems are interwoven throughout Lin's technique.

### 2.2 The Second Exercise

The second sequence on the floor, a variation of the first exercise, uses a circular path in the spine by extending and counterbalancing the two ends of the spine. The preparation for this exercise involves grounding one's head on the floor in a sitting position that

curves the upper body over the legs. This sequence initiates from the coccyx and moves upwards through the spine while the resistance of the head keeps the spine's ends as close as possible. With this initiating power, the coccyx gradually departs from the floor and the two folded legs form a triangle, the knees acting as pillars against the floor. The further the coccyx pushes forward, the more the upper body spreads with the head still on the floor as a force of resistance. As a result, the body is in a curved "S" shape, but a fluid one that is capable of moving. It is not until the end of this sequence that the head, following the curve of the spine, extends toward the ceiling or to a back bend. The reverse of this sequence is also led by the coccyx but with the head kept in the opposing direction and the whole body sits back in its original position with a curved upper body. This sequence can also be executed on the right and left side of the body in a two-dimensional level when the pubic bone is kept toward the front of the body. As a result, this exercise has four directions: front, back, right, and left, and each direction can be connected in order to operate as a whole circle. When I practice this second exercise, I feel that it tends to develop the strength and the power of the hips with the upper body spreading out as a counter support. This exercise also moves at a slow tempo working each motion in a detailed and challenging way.

### 3. *Huan* Walking in Silence

The "*Huan* Walking in Silence" exercise is a standard training exercise that Legend Lin Dance Theater practices. This is not only because this exercise is practiced in every class, whether as part of a workshop or rehearsal, but also because it is the main movement that constitutes Lin's choreography. First, walkers prepare themselves by

standing with their eyes closed to find a balanced way in their breath. In the studio there are often several mats set out in different locations in case of injury. Then, the class starts the walking, each student on her or his own time. The beginners walk with their eyes slightly open, moving with lowered eyelids and limited sight, while the advanced students walk with their eyes totally shut, moving through the space without sight but with all their other sensations open and alive.

There are some specific strategies to this walking, although the teacher allows people to bring in their own different ways of moving and their individual personalities to the technique. This practice of walking is not simply a pedestrian walk in slow motion. The key to this walking is to use the Core as the origin of energy and the leader of the whole body. The shifting of the weight from one foot to the other is caused by the force of the Core and by the accompanying position of the Pelvis. With loose knees and ankles, the concentrated Core keeps the whole body in line along its central axis while maintaining the feet in a line. The knees are not purposely turned inward and bent but happen to align that way as a result of keeping the Core focused. The feet glide along the floor and ground into it quietly and gently, like touching the water's surface. The teacher introduces us to the image of walking on the water to soften our feet as we take each new step.

With my eyes closed, I can sense the tension and imbalance of my whole body—tension that has been caused by the feeling of insecurity and of fear as I move through this unknown space. At first, it becomes very difficult for me to take even one step. After I get accustomed the unseen world, I bring my body forward but move

hesitantly and inconsistently. It is not until opening up every inch of my skin so that all the sensations of my body are awake that I can practice this walking in a more quiet state. The teacher reminds us that this walking is a challenge to one's "evil heart" and one has to open up the "sight of the heart" to proceed with one's body. In other words, this walking is meant to not only train one's body but also to generate reflection on one's selfhood.

"Strength Walking," is the next level of "*Huan* Walking" in the dancers' training. With the assistance of intensive drumming, dancers situate themselves in the "*Huan* Walking" mode and let their Core lead their bodies at a faster pace. The "Strength Walking" grounds the weight more directly into the floor in order to generate power from the Core. The spine and the Core lead the legs, which move in gradually bigger steps. Teacher Tsai explains that the strength of the spine is like the handle of a whip, and the legs, extended into space, are thrown out like the tip of the whip. That is why the movement of the legs in the "Strength Walking" is not initiated by the muscles of the legs but from the Core and spine. According to my interviews with the dancers, both female and male dancers practice this exercise of "Strength Walking" in company classes;[23] but, the male dancers usually practice it more because they use this movement a lot in performing Lin's choreography on stage.

In sum, Lee-Chen Lin constructs a specific training system to focus on the major concepts of her theorization of the dancing body. Lin integrates these concepts into her choreographed sequences as part of the training of her dancers in order to

[23] Bi-Jue Tsai. Personal Interview. October, 2010

re-conceptualize their bodies into her ideal "Eastern" body, which she considers an "original" body, and implicitly, an original "Taiwanese" body. Lin's intention to pursue a "non-Western" aesthetic is embodied in the detailed construction of her highly specific training practices, as well as in her narratives. Her particular conceptualization of the body, which requires a religious-like concentration and spiritual connection, not only provides the principal aesthetic to her choreography but also form a sense of community for the dancers. What is important to this analysis is not so much the elements she integrates in her conceptualization of body, but how and why she positions herself in her search for an "original/Eastern" body. By examining the content of Lin's training system, I will discuss the positioning of Lee-Chen Lin in relation to her claims.

## III. "Eastern" Body as Lee-Chen' Lin's Autonomous Position

In the previous section, I described Lin's training system in detail not only to demonstrate her training approaches but, most importantly, to disclose her process as well as her efforts in searching for an "original" and an "Eastern" body. In this next section, I investigate further Lin's claims of autonomy and her concept of "returning" to the "origin", i.e. the Core of the body, as a mode of living in response to contemporary "westernized" life. My main focuses are how Lin feels her body was dislocated in "western" training practices, how she intends to "return" and relocate herself through creation, and how she claims artistic autonomy as a Taiwanese choreographers.

### 1. The Root of the Body and of Subjectivity

In the 1970s, Lee-Chen Lin, like many other Taiwanese artists, was participating in

the dance profession in Taiwan at a time when Americanization and modernism were popular. Although Chinese *Min-Zu* dance was still alive due to its status as a "national dance" in Taiwan, Ballet and (American) Modern dance were welcomed and fascinated many young dancers. Most Taiwanese dancers were trained in these western dance techniques, along with Chinese *Min-Zu* dance. As a result, as I discussed in previous chapters, Taiwanese dancers and choreographers perceived the form and the content of modern dance, as well as ballet, as the principal medium for choreography, and so did Lee-Chen Lin in her early creations.

However, the concept of "roots" has been discussed in Lin's chorography as early as in her dance concert "Do Not Forget Your Umbrella". At this moment, the concept of "root" was not so much a new-found cultural resource or a form of Taiwanese folk culture but was instead a profound description of her life experiences in both rural and urban Taiwan. In a dance review written by Yu Zhou, he cites Lin as stating that in her choreography, she is interested in "searching for the root by doing instead of saying"[24]. In Zhou's quotation from Lin's interview, Lin expresses her concerns about finding a fundamental understanding of dance and of the body. Also, 1970s Taiwan was a developing society with rapidly growing economic achievements and social changes. In this decade, Taiwanese society was pushed from a largely agricultural to a largely industrial style of life. Lin's insights express her feeling that there is a need to explore the "root" of Taiwanese contemporary life. In other words, the "root" here is a nostalgic

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[24] Yu Zhou, "The Hometown of Heaven and Human (*tianren de yuanxiang*)," in *Song of Pensive Beholding*, ed. Wen-Li Lin (Taipei: National Chiang Kai-Shek Cultural Center, 2010). p28-31

calling for a "native" culture from previous community life in order to refuse the feeling of being dislocated in modern "westernized" life.

In the 1980s, Lin was involved in the reconsideration and appreciation of folk and Indigenous cultures in Taiwan, and started to express her interest in artistically "returning" to Taiwanese culture. As I discussed in the previous chapters, anthropological interests in researching one's own native culture and folklore were popular among theater and dance artists, along with writers as well as film producers in Taiwan. Lin's temporary retirement from the dance world did not altogether hinder her association and interaction with other artists. Her aesthetic and choreographic style in the late 1980s foreshadowed her later interest in the concept of "Eastern Aesthetics," which would incorporate elements from folk culture and from Indigenous spirits. I suggest that in this period, through her productions, Lin examined possible ways to "relocate" her concept of a Taiwanese body back to an original and therefore "non-western" body. The "relocation" of her longing for an ideal body leads her to a critical re-theorizing of the Taiwanese body as a subject position.

**2. Claiming Artistic Autonomy without Western Influence**

Lin's claims of artistic autonomy are easily found in several texts such as in show programs, newspaper articles, and in her discussions about her technique. The text in the program and in the National Artistic Award of 2005 introduces Lee-Chen Lin as an artist who "never studied in any foreign trainings and styles" to praise her independence, intuition and autonomous creations that drew largely from local culture[25]. In her response

[25] Legend Lin Dance Theater Websites, introduction notes in the programs, the introduction of artist in the

to a student who suggested a similarity between Lin's training practices and Japanese Butoh, Lin states that "she never received training in Butoh and it is possible that some basic concepts of the body are shared among different training systems in the world"[26]. In these narratives, Lin emphasizes that she is not affected by any foreign artistic styles, especially refusing the idea of western influences.

I am less interested in whether these descriptions of her autonomy are true or not, nor in what exactly her resource is to develop the particular artistic aesthetics, but what fascinates me is her insistence on "pure" independence in artistic creation. Unlike the U theater, which always reveals its connection to the Jerzy Grotowski's training system, or Cloud Gate Dance Theater that recognizes its early influences from Martha Graham[27], Lin primarily argues that her inspiration and content come instead from Eastern spiritual practices and the local culture of Taiwan. She asserts that her specific "form" of dancing, which is generally praised as innovative, comes from her unique training system with her version of an Eastern aesthetic.

This statement may largely come from her rejection of the westernized body and from her efforts to find a "pure" and "original" body as a Taiwanese artist. She continually stresses her disposal of "western" conceptualizations of the body along with any possible "western" influences. From her critical reflections on Western

National Artist award 2005.

[26] This question arose at the final class in the workshop that I participated in. One of the audience members raised this question during the questions and answer session

[27] But I have to remind my reader that after 1998, Cloud Gate Dance Theater, also "created" and claimed autonomy in its Tai-Chi Dao-Yin dancing body that was based on "Eastern" philosophies and body trainings.

techniques—techniques that she suggests treat the human body as a tool— Lin establishes her theory of the body as an organic circular system. She transforms these concepts mostly from Taoist practices in Taiwan, while she carefully clarifies the difference between ascetic Taoist religious practices and her dance training. Because Lin longs for an "original" body with origins in her own culture, she refuses westernized perspectives or fusions in her own understandings of her research as well as her choreography.

## Section Two: *Jiao* and Its Local Religious Practices in Taiwan

In this section, I investigate possible local readings of Lin's *Jiao*[28] and her choreographic strategies for delivering ritual meanings and spiritual connections to Taiwanese theater audiences. I will first situate *Jiao* in the local context of the Taiwan Lin associates with her childhood memories and experiences. By describing the structure of the choreography and several of its scenes in relation to the local religious practices that it refers to, I further analyze how Lin's choreography achieves her goal of creating a sincere journey through ritual dance theater by transforming specific local ritual meanings into beautiful scenarios for the theater. Although critics often praise *Jiao* as a successful work that bridges "the traditional" and "the modern," I will question and reconsider the concept of "the traditional" in Taiwanese local rituals (as well as Asia in general) in terms of the concepts of "Dual Time" and of "alternative modernity". From this perspective, I perceive *Jiao* not so much as a "bridge" between the past and the present in a liner and implicitly binary concept of time, but as a nostalgic longing that re-interprets an ideal that generates critical reflection on the body as a flexible subject position at the moment of its staging.

### I. *Jiao*'s inspiration: The Ghost Festival in Keelung

*Jiao (Mirrors of Life),* first staged in 1995 and restaged in 2006 in Taiwan, is the first production of Legend Lin Dance Theater. Lee-Chen Lin has only created three works

[28] In this discussion, I use the italic *Jiao*, a Pinyin translation from its Chinese title "醮" to refer to Lin's dance work. The title used for English audiences, *Mirrors of Life,* is not a direct translation of its Chinese title. I use "Jiao," to refer to the specific Taoist religious practice held in Taiwan, from which Lin's work draws its title.

during the past sixteen years. The second dance production was *Anthem to Fading Flowers,* staged in 2000, and the most recent work, *Song of Pensive Beholding*, was staged in the end of 2009. All three dance productions premiered in the National Theater in Taipei and were invited to tour to several international dance festivals in Europe. Lin has been praised for her slow rate of production and her insistence to spend time and energy to choreograph each delicate and influential dance.

*Jiao* is a contemporary dance theater work that reflects upon the relationship between the dead and the living and the cycle of the universe. Lin incorporates Taoist rituals and philosophy, as well as Ma-Zu religious narratives into *Jiao* and presents it in a ritual and "traditional" atmosphere. Here I use the term "traditional" to refer to cultural continuity in a larger social context. However, *Jiao*'s content draws largely from Lin's experience and memories of the Ghost Festival and therefore, while appearing to be traditional, the performance and form of *Jiao* is largely considered a contemporary creation because of Lin's use of a specific body aesthetic. *Jiao* is praised as a good "ritual theater" work because it "represents a true sincerity[29]". I will explore Lin's *Jiao* in relation to the idea of ritual theater in a later section. Simply put, *Jiao* not only stages "traditional" ritual practices and religious meanings but also in itself presents a choreographic interpretation of the relationship between human beings, spirituality and the universe.

After its first staging in 1995, *Jiao* was invited to perform in Marnes River Valley Dance Festival in 1997 and at the Avignon Art Festival in 1998. Its French title is *Miroirs*

[29] Chen-Wei Chen. "Ritual is the Reflection of Collective Experience" .Notes in the program of *Jiao*. 2006.

*De Vie* and its English title is *Mirrors of Life* rather than the Chinese title *Jiao* as it is named in Taiwan. According to the invitations from other European Dance Festivals and news reports, *Mirrors of Life* was well received by European audiences. Although the English program explains that this choreography is inspired by "Jiao" which is, according to the program, "a Taoist open-air ceremony held during the Ghost Festival in the seventh lunar month[30]", the title "*Mirrors of Life*" emphasizes the encounter between the living and the dead in the cycle of the universe, instead of the local ritual that provides the inspiration for the work. I will discuss Legend Lin Dance Theater's global strategies further in a later section.

Lin draws her inspiration from the "Chung Yuan Festival—"a Ghost Festival in Keelung, a smaller city/town where Lin grew up before she moved to Taipei. The Ghost Festival, held in the middle of the seventh month of the lunar calendar, is the most popular religious activity of the year in Keelung. The Ghost Festival is held in order to comfort homeless ghosts, the dead whose bodies cannot be found by their families, most of whom died in battles and in accidents. Keelung was a fishing village, and an important ocean port, and later became a small city. In its early days, characterized by several different waves of migration, many serious battles among different immigrant groups occurred in Keelung, the most infamous, tragic and endless of which was between immigrants from Zhangzhou and Quanzhou, two different counties of the Fujin Province. As a result, the Ghost Festival was proposed in an attempt to cease the fights between the two groups of people by ritually mourning these deaths together, by appeasing the ghosts

[30] Notes in the program of *Jiao*. 2006

and, most importantly, the hatred that existed since the time of the immigrants' ancestors.

The Ghost Festival integrates the popular Ma-Zu religion which holds rites of death on the ocean. Tragic shipwrecks are daily concerns for the people who reside in Keelung (as is frequently the case in fishing villages) so the Ghost Festival in Keelung is an important religious activity where the living pray for their dead family members and pay respect to those unknown powers. The festival extends its range of mourning to include all nameless and homeless spirits and even tracks back to the diasporic French ghosts who died in Keelung in the Chinese-French War. The festival involves calling all ghosts in the ocean to come and enjoy the feasts provided during the ceremonies. The making of "Water Lanterns", which are paper-made items in the shape of a small house, is an important activity that provides religious means of transport for those drowned ghosts to depart from their suffering in the water so they might enter "the circle of life". Numerous lit paper houses are sent into the ocean at night in order to light up a pathway and a direction so that those wandering ghosts can come home.

Most Taiwanese people believe that during ghost month, humankind and the spirits occupy and share the same space since the border between the living and the dead opens on the first day of the seventh month of each lunar year. In other words, the world enters a liminal state on a daily basis until the last day of July, when its border closes. People pay their respects by holding rituals and by preparing rich feasts for the spirits, not only out of fear of their unknown powers but also out of sympathy and a desire to help them overcome their suffering. It is also believed that the spirits punish guilty people for their misbehavior more frequently during this month than in any other. Offending humans are

at risk of suffering an evil fate or divine punishment, even if they are not charged by human laws. As a result, ghost month is a time of contact between the human and spirit worlds, between confession and reparation, and between good and evil powers.

Lin's choreography *Jiao* relies heavily on the ritual meanings and symbols of the Ghost Festival and Ma-Zu belief. Lin also brings in several Taoist religious practices held in the Ghost Festival in Keelung to this dance theater work. *Jiao* is based on her childhood memory and experiences in Keelung and transforms the respect, the fear, and the blessing of humanity into movements that speak to her specific aesthetic. The work of *Jiao* is an accumulation of her previous artistic experiences and of her reflections on the dancing body. I will next further discuss the detail of *Jiao*.

## II. The Structure of *Jiao*

*Jiao* is a ritual dance theater work that "take[s] the theater as a shrine.[31]" From the moment the audience enters the theatre they are situated in a holy atmosphere; the stage is illuminated with candles and the music, the singing of religious scripture, is played lightly overhead. Opening with the twelve clangs of a gong breaking through the ceremonial silence, the performance of *Jiao* slowly unfolds its narrative flow as one whole piece without interruption. The transitions between sections proceed by transforming the spacing and altering its timing; this effect is produced by relational positions among different dancing bodies. With all these bodies moving smoothly and silently on stage, *Jiao* presents a beautiful ritual fantasy or wonderland in a manner that

[31] Notes in the program of *Jiao*. 2006

layers transitions between various scenarios while one scene is always doubled and layered with the following scene in audience's eyes.

*Jiao* is separated into twelve sections, each with different themes in the program's description. It states that the twelve sections are performed according to the twelve "Shichen", Earthly Branches, which divide a single day into two-hour segments as practiced in Taoism. The twelve sections piece several ritual scenarios and stories together that demonstrate the circle of the ritual in metaphoric reference to the circle of life. The twelve sections are: *Purification, Illumination, Evocation, Oblation, Preparation, Recollection, Mediation, Agitation, Possession, Reflection, Transmigration,* and *Extinction*. Rather than discussing each motif in twelve separate sections, I will synthesize these themes into seven parts because they are hardly separated clearly.

1. Part I: *Purification* and *Illumination*

The purpose of the first part of *Jiao* is to transform the theater into a sacred space by practicing the ceremony of purification and offering Taoist oblation on stage. The rite of purification is held on stage by a genuine high-ranking priest, Ming-Zheng Li, who has the religious authority to host the ceremony. With the opening of the curtain, the priest and his four followers, all dressed in Taoist attire and handling lit torches, walk in a patterned step to the center of the stage. As assistants, the four followers stand in a square with the priest in the center. Li makes religious gestures, steps, and lightly throws water in the air toward each corner of the stage as religious lyrics are spoken. After performing a ritual, Lin lights up a mortar that is set downstage center and retreats from the stage.

The rite of purification in *Jiao* mirrors the beginning rite of "Jiao" performed in Taoist temples. Its purpose is not only to dispel evil spirits but also to open up the gate between the human world and the spiritual world.

Following the departure of the priest, a scene that contemplates the meaning of birth and rebirth takes the stage. A faint light upstage comes on and reveals several dancers dressed in red sitting in a circle on the floor. One female dancer slowly stands up with a bundle swaddled in red cloth signifying a baby, in her hands. Her face expresses affection and compassion toward the baby. Then, an old woman accompanied by several children with their palms together, comes to the stage burning incense (a Taoist religious offering) and praying as she faces center stage. On the stage left, one man carries a big yellow lantern painted with the Chinese character, "Lin", the last name of the choreographer Lee-Chen Lin, on it. The Man speaks and sings in Min-Nan (a Taiwanese dialect) in a poetic format toward audience to announce the start of the whole performance with blessings. Then the lights on stage fade out.

*2. Evocation*

The scene that follows the *Illumination* begins with the strong sound of drums. Two male drummers slowly come to the two sides of stage placing lit candles beside themselves. They kneel down and pick up the drum sticks in a slow motion, while their naked upper bodies show the curvature of their muscles under a faint light. With deep breaths, they hit the big drums delivering a sudden and strong sound, which produces a moment of shock and suspense. Their drumming then accompanies four male dancers

who take the stage.

The four male dancers each set a candle at a different corner of the stage before reconvening center stage. They wear only red rope around their hips— their legs and upper body naked— and have some bells tied to their ankles. They gather in a tight square with their arms in the air, their fingers firmly pushed against the others' fingers, and their legs bent in the position of a horse's stance, which extends their lower bodies and grounds their weight deeply into the floor. The visual effect is like a temple with their hands acting as the arches of a roof. Their performance creates a trancelike atmosphere similar to what one might see during meditation in Taoist religious practices.

3. *Oblation* and *Preparation*

The black curtain that covers the back upstage wall opens and the music of "South Tube" fills the air. Two dancers slowly enter the front of the stage with candles in their hands and gradually walk across the stage moving from left to center stage. A female dancer, dressed as the Ocean Goddess Ma-Zu, appears upstage center followed closely behind by two male dancers dressed as Ma-Zu's guards. The two guards can be identified from religious meanings as Qianli Yan ("Thousand Miles Eye") and Shunfeng Er ("With-the-Wind Ear"). The first one, Qianli Yan raises his lantern with the Chinese character "醮" (Jiao) on it, and walks in a clam and stable manner. The second, Shunfeng Er, holds an ordering token that works as a calling of the soul, and his twisted face and body continue to contort as he walks. According to the dancers' accounts, the two guards represent two opposite qualities, dark evil and bright spirit. Behind the three characters,

each of whom draw their meaning from the Ma-Zu religion, several female and male dancers, dispersed across the back of the stage, follow behind them. Several of these new dancers hold incense in their hands, while others handle a long branch or reed of flowers. All the dancers walk in slow motion, gradually approaching the audience in a steady rhythm. Their appearance, accompanied by faint lights in the back and brighter lights in the front, creates the illusion that they are floating on the ocean, like a ship moving closer and closer, in which these ghosts are generally clearly seen.

Figure. 4-1. *Oblation*

After Ma-Zu and her two guards turn and depart toward the stage right, the other dancers slowly turn inward and retreat silently except a group of female dancers. Gradually, the female dancers, who hold a screen-like red silk cloth in their hands, are revealed. One solo female dancer, who supports the cloth with a horizontal stick, is in the center of the group and is hidden under the fabric. The dancers in the front slowly kneel down and move forward gradually bringing their fabric onto floor with their hands still holding it. The fabric is reminiscent of falling water, like a cascade that gradually washes though and cleans the body of the soloist.

The solo dancer, the Bride, is naked from her waist up and wrapped in a long cloth-like sarong around her waist. She slowly crouches down on one knee while the other dancers place the red fabric, spreading it like a folding screen wall, in a semi-circle around her. This scene is much like a Bride sitting and dressing herself in preparation for her wedding. She performs a series of movements like putting rouge on her lips, softly combing her hair, and undulating her hands as though gently skimming them through the water. In a moment of shock, she suddenly realizes that she is dead and is a spirit, a revelation that recollects her memory of the living with the dead.

The Bride slowly turns her body over, arms raised in the air, while other dancers bring the fabric to wrap her in a counter-clockwise circle. The Bride extends her arms and turns toward the back. Then, the dancers go the opposite direction to unfold the cloth and exit from both sides of the stage. The Bride is left alone on stage, sitting on the floor with her beautiful back toward the audience.

Figure. 4-2. *Preparation*

4. *Recollection* and *Mediation*

A male dancer appears upstage on the floor when a light projects slightly on his

body. It is a moment of longing; the Bride is sitting and waiting for this man, her former lover, who remains at the far end of the dark stage; the two bodies mirror each other from the audience's perspective. The Bride wraps the red cloth around herself, stands up, walks to stage right, and turns back to face the male dancer, who stands up opposite her. At the same time, four female dancers holding sticks of reed flowers enter the space and form a row in the middle of the stage, separating the Bride and her Lover. The four dancers turn and retreat to both sides, while the Bride and her Lover move toward each other.

The Bride and her Lover finally meet in the center. Without touching each other, they slowly kneel down while the other dancers, occupying four corners, also kneel down with their upper body leaning forward and the sticks of reed flowers lying on the floor. Sitting on their knees and facing each other, the Bride and her Lover suddenly intertwine their upper bodies, the male facing the front and the female facing the back. The Bride brings the red cloth to cover her body. They then slowly lean to the right and the male takes over the red cloth to cover them both. At the same time, the four female dancers softly shake their reeds spreading the flowers in the air and on the intertwined bodies of the lovers. This beautiful moment has become a definitive and iconic image of the work, a photo of which is used in the program and in the press release.

After the moment of the two lovers' fantastic and passionate encounter, the audience can see that there is an evil spirit approaching from upstage where a light gradually comes up. The lying couple retreats to a pose where the male hugs the female, covered by the red cloth, his chest facing the audience in a seated position. The four dancers retreat with their reed flowers and shortly thereafter another group of dancers enter from both

sides of the stage with Lotus Fire Lanterns. As the evil spirit advances, the couple stands up, shoulder to shoulder, and moves backward. They turn inward, come face to face, withdraw and separate from each other, while female dancers cross in front and form the shape of a boat lit by the Lotus Lanterns.

Figure. 4-3. The encounter between The Bride and her Lover

Figure. 4-4. *Mediation*

5. *Agitation* and *Possession*

With the increasing dynamic sounds of drumming, the evil spirit, a male dancer, advances downstage with twisted movements and distorted facial expressions. He opens his palm and paints his face and body with red blood symbolizing a greedy desire. A

square of light is in front of him, which he walks into. The male dancer starts to shake his body, as though he is going into a trance, with his hand raising the stick of reed flowers and then the lights go out. Eight male dancers suddenly appear and stand on the four corners of the stage and stare at each other. Six of them hold the sticks of reed flowers and two of them do not. The eight energetic bodies break through the whole space of the stage with a fast, wide, and aggressive gait. They form two groups, four dancers in each, and stand on a diagonal (downstage right and upstage left), which indicates an antagonistic force between the groups. In each group, one dancer struggles against the others and is pushed, step by step, toward the center of the stage. Then, the two tormented dancers jump from a handstand position to lying on the floor where they crawl like animals toward each other in the middle of the stage. They push and make contact with each other and raise their arms in a gesture of horns like a bull. These movements signify that they are fighting vigorously with each other.

Then, the two fighting men separate from each other and rejoin their original groups. The members of both groups make several turns outward, crawl to different a space of the stage, and then work their way back to a small circle with eight dancers. They step and shake their sticks of reed flowers heavily on the floor and walk violently across the whole space of the stage again. As soon as they reform the two groups, the battle between them begins again. But this time, rather than two individuals coming forward, both groups move towards the center at each other when suddenly their quick walks fill the stage forming two outward circles before they depart from the stage. The whole section proceeds in a torrent of wild and violent emotion that describes and narrates battles from

Taiwanese history, through which the endless desires and fighting of humankind are expressed.

Four male dancers walk in a row under a canopy made of ragged clothes that looks similar to a flag used in religious practices. They shake and intertwine their bodies ferociously as though they are in a great amount of pain and in a trance. They then advance slowly downstage. One male dancer struggles and writhes on the floor downstage. Another dancer approaches him and whips him with a stick of reed flowers, while he violently twists his body on the floor. Unhurriedly, the sound of the "Suona Horn" chimes in and interrupts the whipping. The dancer on the floor is left alone and gasps for his breath, while the other dancers depart from the stage. A musician walks across the gradually darkening stage. The last image that the audience sees and hears is the exhausted and deep breaths of the dancer alone. The intense whipping and the release of the spirit that follows can be understood as part of the religious notions of reparation and cleaning. It also represents a passage of the soul of the dying and of being comforted through religious practices.

Figure. 4-5. *Agitation*

Figure. 4-6 *Possession*

*6. Reflection*

Several female dancers walk rhythmically from upstage toward the audience creating the illusion that they are both sinking and floating. They wear red saris with extended skirts on both sides of the body. They slowly pick up the tip of the fabric and spread it widely, like screens, across their hands. They suddenly wave the skirts in the air and the dancers slowly lie down on the floor. Then, after extending and spinning their bodies, they stand up and turn in a vertical direction holding the red cloths. They weave the red fabric toward their left and right side across the space, which saturates the stage in red. One dancer slowly retreats along the central line towards upstage, while the other female dancers continue weaving their cloths. This scene constructs an image of a bloody ocean, in which those violent events are reflected in the waters.

Figure. 4-7. *Reflection*

7. *Transmigration* and *Extinction*

A single paper-made house symbolizing the water-lantern in the Ghost Festival is shouldered, like the Goddess's sedan, by four dancers and set in the center of the stage. A

yellow lantern with the character “醮(Jiao)”, which first appeared in the touring of Ma-Zu, leads the water lantern to the center and turns to the upstage right diagonal behind it. Female dancers enter the space holding lanterns and surrounding the paper house. One male dancer holds a torch and burns the paper house onstage. With the raging fire sparking in the air and with everyone’s eyes on it, the whole stage darkens for the very end of *Jiao* while the music of “Heart Sutra” plays and echoes seemingly endlessly.

Figure.4-8. *Extinction*

## III. Choreographing Liminal Space and Ritual Efficacy

Lin’s *Jiao* relies heavily on religious symbols and cultural references from local Taoist rituals in the Ghost Festival. She carefully constructs spirituality through her connection to local ritual as part of her aesthetic choice and as a way of positioning herself. She clarifies that her intention is not to “represent” the ritual, in which specific actions would function to communicate with the spiritual world, but to transform the theater into a ritual, in which the audience does not simply spectate a performance but is involved in a journey of holiness. By situating her audience in the sacred space of her

choreographed ritual, Lin reflects on the overwhelming desires and endless wars in the real world. Drawing from local ritual without being an exact duplication on stage, Lin constructs her own ritual that peruses its actuality and liminality. I will discuss in detail her strategies to bring ritual to the theater (or create the theater as a ritual) in the local context of Taiwan.

First, Lin borrows religious authority from the real world to open and close the performance of *Jiao*— a framework that sets the dance up as a process reflecting the whole ritual and contributes to religious efficacy on stage. The professional and high-ranking head priest does not pretend to perform the ritual but instead "enacts" its religious functions on stage. In other words, the opening of the dance makes the audience believe and practice the ritual and create a purified and therefore sacred space (in the theater), even in the context of a dance performance. In the last part of the dance, Lin also burns the religious paper-house, the water lantern in the Ghost Festival, to have a kind of pyre in the theater, which reconnects the audience to the ritual practiced in Keelung. In fact, the opening and the ending of *Jiao*, respond to Lin's belief that the performance of *Jiao* brings all the dancers and members of the audience into a ritual context.

Several identical religious items, which function as a means of communication with the spiritual world in Taoist ritual, are also brought into Lin's ritual, such as burning incenses, lit candles, and lotus lights. With these fires swaying in the air, the audience can potentially sense the existence of the ritual and of the spirits. Lin's previous ethnographic research and cooperation with folklore scholars allowed her to put *Jiao* in dialogue with the metaphorical systems of Taoist practices.

Also, In Lee-Chen Lin's staging of Ma-Zu, she dresses a dancer as this goddess who guides and leads all creatures, the living and the dead, throughout the whole piece. Lin's onstage portrayal of Ma-Zu moves in one direction, slow but steady, which reaffirms the goddess' role as a guiding spirit orienting all beings as they move across the ocean. The image of the goddess Lin constructs, like the concept of Ma-Zu in the local belief, is that of a universal mother, but without emphasizing her female sexuality thus revealing her "natural" dignity. With a heavy costume that occupies more space than any other on stage, Ma-Zu slowly journeys across the space with rooted steps, never still, which signifies her endless traveling. Followed by all the ghosts in the spiritual world and prayed to by the old woman and the children in the earthly world, Lin's Ma-Zu exits the stage and becomes the invisible power present throughout the rest of dance.

The performance of the Bride's *Preparation* is an important and crucial part for which an understanding of the religious undertones is required. From my understanding, this scene narrates a bride dressing herself when she suddenly realizes she is already a ghost. However, simple or superficial readings of this part may oversimplify the female's solo. Lin explained in an interview that every movement in this solo has a specific meaning and connection to religious practice, even though it is done without the props usually associated with these practices. On the rite table of the Ghost Festival, people prepare and set five daily items for the ghosts to use: a towel, comb, rouge, mirror, and a bowl of water. This religious practice therefore is transformed to the performance in which the female spirit combs her hair, puts on rouge and gently dips her fingers in the water. It is when she sees the image reflected on the water that she is shocked and recollects the

memory of her death. Without a proper understanding of these religious references, audiences may hardly notice Lin's deep sympathy toward the female spirit, which, in fact, inspired the whole choreography of *Jiao*.

Lin's construction of a ritual ambience is not exclusively based on those authentic religious items that I mentioned above, but also on the transformed and created symbolic, ritual, and visual effects, such as the reed flowers and red clothes that are not necessarily used in Taoist religious practices. For example, the reed flowers are employed to evoke cultural and historical memories from local Taiwan on the stage. The reed flowers are used in several sections throughout the piece. They connect the touching moment and romantic blessing between the lovers in the section *Recollection*, but the reed flowers are later transformed into a weapon of war in the section *Agitation*. Later, they become the tool for whipping the soul of the painful dying body that signifies the self-punishment of male meditator in the trance state of religious practices. The reed flowers do not hold religious meaning, but work as a way of recalling the cultural landscape in local Taiwan. In the early historical Taiwanese battles depicted in Jiao, different groups of immigrants used reeds to mark the boundary of their land, and their battles and deaths often happened along the riverside where the reeds grow lushly on the marsh ground. The open-ended though highly symbolic reed flowers create a sense of ritual that brings a different sense of location to theater. Lin continually emphasizes that the material objects onstage all have their own life and perform much like dancers do.

Moreover, Lin sets *Jiao* in-between several binary concepts while emphasizing a space of crossover and of encounter. The priest and prayers of the physical world

introduce the Goddess and the ghosts of the metaphysical world. The female and male spirits are situated in a binary position and their meeting could only happen in a space of liminalility, between the spiritual world and the real world. The beauty of the two lovers is expelled by the evil and restless resentment of the male spirits. The suffering ghost is consoled by religious enforcement. Anthropologist Victor Turner analyzes his fieldwork to argue how ritual as a performance transforms social conflicts and argues that liminality as a transitional state is productive and is the state in which one is "temporarily undefined."[32] The performance of *Jiao*, in fact, embodies and narrates the liminal space in the Ghost Festival's religious practices, where the living meet the dead, the feminine meets the masculine, the loved meet the hated, and the past meets the present, all in Lin's belief of a circle of life.

Believe it or not, audiences sometimes feel uneasy about being situated in this in-between space—the hyphen of ritual-theater—where it is somehow difficult to distinguish *Jiao* as a ritual in a theater or a theater work about ritual[33]. This review shows the success and efficacy of ritual constructed in *Jiao*, while it also discloses its failure to maintain the "third space" of the theater. In other words, there may be a danger in ritualizing the performance as its success pulls audiences into the fantasy of ritual, but flattens the reflective distance often found in the theater, in which believing it or not becomes a choice left to audience.

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[32] Victor Turner, *From ritual to theatre: the human seriousness of play* (New York City: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982). 26-27.

[33] Jian-Yin Lu, "Providing Various Thinking: a Dance Review of Lin Lee-Chen's Jiao (*Tigong xuduosikao ke ti de Jiao Lin, Li-Chen wujuguanhougan*)," *Performing Arts Review*, no. 33 (1995). P88.

## IV. Nostalgia in Motion with Dual Time

The choreography of *Jiao*, which appears to utilize a classical aesthetic with innovative choreography, is often praised by dance critics as a bridge between "the traditional" and "the modern." While the concept of the traditional is often associated with the past, which is problematic in the cultural practices of Taiwan and Asian society at large, I further discuss the dancing bodies of *Jiao* and their connection to Time, more specifically in relation to the practices of "Dual Time,[34]" and to the possibility of an alternative modernity in Taiwan. Drawing from Lin's specific choreography of walking, I suggest that she approaches her nostalgic longing in an endless process of immediate reflection that regenerates with every step between the past and the ongoing present.

As a work of ritual theater, Lee-Chen Lin's *Jiao* calls for a time of ritual in the urban theater by incorporating "Dual Time" into the choreography. Ritual time relies upon Taoist approaches to the lunar and solar cycles, which agricultural societies have depended on, while modernized (and western) time depends on standardized time, the basis of capitalized society. Lin's work aims to represent the spiritual experience of the ritual in the theater and to situate the audience in between the living and the dead. She wants the audience to have a ritual experience enabled by the theater. I suggest Lin's *Jiao* summons nostalgia from its calling of ritual time and paralleling it with the standard time of the theater.

[34] "Dual Time," a concept proposed by Chinese literature scholar Leo Ou-fan Lee, refers to the parallel operating of two different time systems, both Lunar and Solar calendars, in contemporary Chinese life; the "traditional" practices survive and integrate without assimilating or disappearing in the "standard" time introduced by the West.

The choreography of *Jiao* is located in an undefined time, neither in the past nor in the present, but as an action and a circulation, of remembering and recalling the ritual in the theater. The audience is physically present in the modern time of theater (the performance begins and ends within a limited frame of time), but they are simultaneously imagining traveling through a series of temporally compressed events in which the twelve time periods “Shichen” of one day and/or the opening of and the closing of Ghost Festival in one month are experienced. The scenarios that are performed may be happening in the past, in the present, in a future, and in an endless circle of life in the theater. The dual time of ritual and of theater operates simultaneously in the performance, where the audience is positioned.

More importantly, what produces this obscure sense of time in *Jiao* is mainly the walking body and its relationship to the music or drums that continually accompany the dancing. In other words, it is mainly the dancing body and its breaths that move time in an organic way instead of in a mechanic way. The dancing body in *Jiao* keeps its sincere state of “in-between-ness” and reflection through its prolonged walking. Moving slowly but never really stopping, the whole body sinks into the floor as though slipping through it. From one foot to another, the temporal standing and temporal walking contextualize and redefine each other. Taiwanese dance scholar Huang Yin-Ying’s argues that the dancer in *Jiao* “leads the spectators on a psychological and spiritual journey into the heart of experience.”[35] In *Jiao*, the walking with full-hearts, spirits, and bodies indicates a

[35] Yin-ying Huang, "*The Bridge from the Past to the Present in Three Contemporary Taiwanese Dance Works Inspired by Literature: Hwai-min Lin's Nine Songs (1993), Fu-Lann Tao's on the Way to the Peony Pavillion (1991), and Sunny Pang's Kwaidan/emaki (1996)*" (Temple University, 2002).p285.

careful awareness of space, time, and energy, in which the past, the present, and the future are in fact an ongoing circulation of removing, relocating and rebalancing the self in time while the subject's body is in constant motion and changing position.

The motion of the walking also signifies the roots and routes of the Taiwanese subject position. Here I do not intend to celebrate a floating diasporic subject position, which has been criticized as a privileged perspective[36], but instead I emphasize the strategy of routes that are rooted, and of roots that are routed, in both Lin's walking and in the Taiwanese subject position. Different from Taiwanese dance scholar Ya-Tin Lin's interpretation of the flexibility of Cloud Gate Dance Theater as a bodily aesthetic, a choreographic strategy as well as a subjective position[37], I suggest that Lee-Chen Lin's choreographic approach resides firmly within an inner stillness and outward motion, in which the subject has to root deeply within her or himself in order to route smoothly on a specified course. In this sense, Lin shows compassion for the diasporic journey of mankind, for the sense of finding a stable cultural home while physically seeming to move from it, but she rejects motions that fail to recognize the Core, the base of one's own subject-hood. She proposes a way of being in walking that grounds one's roots down and, at the same time, projects one's routes onward to their next presence.

Moreover, the dancing body intertwines the "Dual Time" of the ritual and the theater as one, the timing of the corporeal, in *Jiao*. It is important to notice that the seeming two poles of past and present are choreographed as circular, which challenges the ideology of

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[36] James Clifford, "Diaspora," in *Internationalizing Cultural Studies : An Anthology*, ed. Ackbar Abbas Erni and Nguyet John (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2005).

37 Please see Ya-Ting Lin's dissertation.

a liner history. Lin recalls the past and the present of the ghost festival, its history of battles, and its ritual, in opposition to a clear separation of the past, the present, and the future. Although Lin sets up a beginning rite of *Purification* that signifies the coming of spirits, and an ending ritual of a burning water latten that signifies sending the spirits back to the stage, the meeting and separating, the coming and going, and the evil spirit and the healing power shown in *Jiao* are performed to suggest an endless *Ying* and *Yang* cycles of the world. This conceptual staging refuses to conform to a mechanic sense of time but rather emphasizes the sensation of time from the body as well as from the spirit, which is rooted in Taoist philosophy and religious beliefs.

The Taoist religious practices utilized in Jiao are a part of daily experiences in modern Taiwanese society, even when one is not a serious Taoist believer. The use of the lunar calendar, which is largely followed by agricultural activities and also by Taoist practices, has decreased but it is not totally abandoned in the process of industrialization and in the adaptation of a western (standardized) calendar. Chinese literature scholar Leo Ou-fan Lee investigates the Shanghai of 1930s China and discusses how until recently the calendar was designed with two different time systems on it. He uses the concept of "Dual Time" to complicate the model of modernity in Chinese practices.[38] Taiwanese literary scholar Kuei-fen Chiu further uses Lee's concept of "Dual Time" to discuss the development of a false consciousness present in earlier Taiwanese works that sees Taiwan as being "left behind" the time of modernity.[39] In other words, the notion of two times is

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38 Leo Ou-fan Lee, "Time and Modernity in 20th-century China: Some Preliminary Explorations," *Tamkang Review* 30, no. 4 (winter 2000). 67-92

39 Kuei-fen Chiu, "Being Left-Behind in Taiwan's Historical Narratives: Examining the Possibility of

a common phenomenon in Taiwanese modern society, in which the past agricultural society leaves its trace and is parallel to the modern condition. I want to further discuss the concept of Dual Time in relation to the problematic relationship between the binary concept of the traditional and the modern.

It is worthwhile to notice that most people perceive Taoist ritual, or other Asian and Indigenous rituals, as traditional practices that are fixed in the past. On the other hand, most people, even in Taiwanese society, see the rituals of Christian gatherings in a church as part of modern life. The binary of the traditional and the modern easily slips into misrepresentations of the East and the West, in which Asian society is always suffering a sense of temporal lag along the timeline of progress and the only way to be modern is to abandon previous religious practices. However, Taoist rituals are performed in Taiwan side-by-side with industrial life and are renewed in practices and negotiations with the needs of modern life, just like Christian ceremonies are. For example, although certain serious rituals still need to follow the lunar calendar to be held in temples, some religious practices can be done at home allowing for more flexible dates and times so that worship may be held on the weekends or can be performed at the office (if the boss is of the same religious belief). The rite of paying respect in the theater before the opening of a show is still a common practice in the field of Taiwanese performance, in which most people hold burning incenses, while some Christians pray with hands or simply stand in their own religious ways.

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Alternative Time in Women's Writers Works of Modernism" (*luohou de shijian yu taiwan lishi xushu:shitan xiandai zhuyi shiqi nuzuo jiachuang zuoli linglei shijian de jiushu keneng)*," *Intergrams:Studies in Languages and Literature* 3:2(2001).

Although Lin's *Jiao* employs many elements from local rituals, which makes her work appear traditional and classical, Taiwanese audiences perceive her choreography as innovative, or at least relatively experimental. In her idealized world of ritual theater, Lin leads the audience though her unique experience of ritual and of perceiving the world, just like Ma-Zu guided the spirits through their journey across the ocean and through their former lives of love, hate, fantasy and finally peace. In other words, Lin offers a new and contemporary perspective toward religious practices that Taiwanese audiences were either already familiar with, or were, at the very least, acquainted with these rituals. The concept of "alternative modernity" is appropriate for consideration here. If the destination of Euro-American modernization and progress is not a universal attainable endpoint, if the rest of the world can only try to follow or catch up with the West, the nature of *Jiao*, which brings ritual to the stage, cannot be seen simply as a staging of the traditional but possibly a move toward a different future. This move does not bring audiences toward the fragmented excitement and technology of the so-called "post-modern" trends of Euro-American art, but toward a coherent, layered, and utopic destination.

In short, *Jiao* incorporates a body-based consideration of time in which the ritual process and standardized time are brought together. Lin's emphasis on the transition and transformation of a circular path instead of a liner one suggests that *Jiao* does not simply "bridge" the past and the present but rather recollects different fragments into a smoothly transitive circulation in the moment of performance. Her nostalgic longing for a local religious utopia does not affix her creation simply on representations of the ritual, but

instead, on movement that is both rooted and routed. As an Asian female choreographer, Lin's specific aesthetic allows her to position herself as both a local and global figure, which I will discuss in the following section.

## Section Three: The "Oriental Avant-Garde" in the Local/Global Configuration

With itsfantastic images that situate its audience in a mythic "oriental" ritual-theater, Lee-Chen Lin's *Jiao* is praised as part of Taiwan's "Oriental Avant-Garde". I argue that Lin's interests in collectivity and the wholeness of human beings as expressed through rituals are not simply the latest iteration of westernized theatrical innovation, but are instead an evocation of global nostalgia that offers a critique of the fragmented life and of capitalism. I first situate Lin's *Jiao* in the context of global touring, in which its French and English title, "*Mirrors of Life,*" provides international audiences, especially Western European audiences, a specific lens for appreciating a ritual theater work from Taiwan. Next I examine how the local ritual "Jiao" was transformed to Lin's *Jiao* on the metropolitan stage of the Taipei National Theater. Lin's choreography is presented from her own perspective of the cosmos and cultivated with the artistic flavor of the cultural elite, even though Taiwanese audiences may still appreciate it in relation to its local religious context. However, the further *Jiao* departs from its local context and cultural background in order to be staged for global audiences, the more the positioning of *Jiao* as "Oriental" is emphasized. I will further investigate how the positioning of "the Oriental" is a strategy for Taiwanese artists to claim autonomy and visibility in the discourse of the avant-garde performance.

### I. Staging "the Oriental" in the West: From the Untranslatable *Jiao* to the translatable *Mirrors of Life*

Lin's interest in local cultural memory is in part a reflection, as well as a response, to

globalization through which one's local difference not only signifies global visibility but also clarifies the location on which one stands. Dirlik points out that the global relies heavily on the establishment of "locals," so that the relationship of the local to the global is not an even binary but instead "the different configurations of globality"[40]. In other words, how the local culture is reinvented, dislocated, and capitalized upon is a political negotiation. For further discussion, I have to distinguish two different sets of local-global relationships: the local-global within Taiwan and the local-global outside Taiwan. Inside Taiwan, I consider the city of Taipei, which is a metropolitan center where most dance performances occur, an example of the "global," to which I compare the marginal areas of the city and the rural areas of Taiwan, where most local rituals are held, as the "local." Outside Taiwan, Taiwan as a whole is considered to be a local node compared to China, Asia and the world.

From these two sets of local-global relationships, I investigate how Lin adopts a more global-orienting direction in the East-West relationship that offers her more mobility and, at the same time, I reexamine the positioning of Taiwanese choreographers in relation to these questions: what does it mean to return to the root, the "original" body? And what exactly is a "cultural origin"? More importantly, for whom are we searching?

### 1. From Local Ritual to the Urban Stage: Lin's Cosmopolitanism with Sincerity

While urban elites have an affinity for *Jiao* with its artistic transformations and

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[40] Arif Dirlik, "Place-Based Imagination: Globalism and the Politics of Place," in *Places and Politics in an Age of Globalization*, ed. R. Prazniak and A. Dirlik (Lanhan: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001). 29.

displays of ritual-like beauty, it is, in fact, for cultural “insiders,” a more alienating and distanced interpretation of local Taiwanese religious activities. By cultural “insiders” I mean those who are the believers of these local rituals, who experience these Taoist religious practices of “Jiao” in a more collective, boisterous, and interactive way. Lin uses these local rituals as raw material and reinterprets it for the artistic tastes of cultural elites, especially those who are familiar with western theater, avant-garde performance, and “Eastern Body Aesthetics.” If these cultural “insiders go into the theater to see the performance, they may still recognize familiar symbols used in the local rituals, however they may be unacquainted with what is performed in the theater. In other words, Lin’s *Jiao* transforms rural and local meanings for the urban and global audience, in which the local is not only where Lin is based but also where she departs from.

Lin’s “Eastern” aesthetic invites those urban audiences, audiences who may appreciate *Jiao*’s local flavors as its program claims, to see the choreography as a reflection of Lin’s fantastic imagination. But at the same time, *Jiao* is estranged from local religious practices. In Lin’s choreography, the painting on female bodies with white and on male bodies with dark brown brings a strong visual effect but also an exotic impression to the audience—especially when the white painted body may echo the images of Japanese Butoh (a comparison also made when examining the very slow-moving practice in *Jiao*, which is very similar to the corporeal aesthetics of Butoh). Another example of the way *Jiao* repeats but refashions local religious practices can be seen in the beautiful interactions between the female and male dancers. Their meetings appear to be a fantasy because such interactions are not normally thought about in Taoist

religious practices. In particular, the touching between the two, although performed in a non-erotic way, could still be easily interpreted as a sexual intercourse[41]. In sum, Lin draws her inspiration from referencing local spiritual rituals,, while deconstructing its physical practices on stage. She translates these cultural practices into an aesthetic that suits the tastes of cultural elites while alienating the rural population.

However, Lin's choreography, which intends to localize but in fact globalizes the local meaning of "Jiao," also allows her to maintain an ambiguous attitude towards the "localization movement" and the dangerously exclusive Taiwanese Nationalism. Taiwanese cultural studies scholar Liu suggests that the struggle to expel "Chinese symbols" from Taiwanese-ness and to re-root it in "oriental icons" by restoring local Goddesses on stage reveals ambivalent attitudes and the impossibility of attaining this goal[42]. But, Lee-Chen Lin's employment of Ma-Zu and local ritual does not attempt to proclaim an exclusive sense of "localization" but rather to use them as a kind of currency to express Lin's concerns about personal memory, humanity, and a floating Taiwanese identity. In other words, Lin's *Jiao* is rooted in the land of Taiwan as it uses local ritual and Ma-Zu as its raw materials, but it does not proclaim an exclusive symbolic representation of a (ritualized and nationalist) Taiwanese identity, in which symbolic violence works for exclusion rather than inclusion.

Instead, Lin's ideal world of *Jiao* is positioned in her cosmic concern. Different from

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[41] Taiwanese theater critic Mo-Lin Wang interprets this touching as a reference to sexual intercourse. Mo-Lin Wang, "The Original State of Body and Space: the Form of Lin Lee-Chen's *Jiao* (*shenti yu kongjian de yuanxing: shilun linlizhen de jiao zhixingshi*)." *Taiwan Dance Magazine* (1995).

[42] Chi-Hui Liu, *Orphan, Goddess, and the Writing of the Negative: The Performance of Our Symptoms* (Taipei: Lixu Publisher, 2000)..148.

the cosmopolitanism that perceives rootless-ness as freedom, Lin claims the importance of local connection, while simultaneously positing the local value as a basis of world citizenship and of all humankind at large. On the one hand, her approach is close to what Arif Dirlik proposes as a “place-based politics”, in which “place insists on the importance of the past as a source of critical perspectives on the present, while reworking the past with present concerns.”[43] Dirlik proposes that the project of place should not hold a nostalgic tone for a lost past but should rather critically transform the past against modernist project in the present. Lin’s re-conceptualization of the body and of rituals provides a possible reflection on the hustle, aggressiveness, and violence of modern life as well as the history of Taiwan and of the world.

Lin recognizes Taiwan’s local culture as part of her own life experience, which grants her the authority to represent the local through dance and choreography, while her status as a cultural elite who has moved to Taipei and lives a middle-class life in the city offers her the autonomy to transform the local onto the stage. She gains credit and creates her self-positioning through her connection with local culture in order to present her artistic innovations and creations on metropolitan and global stages. After discussing how Lin’s choreography transforms local meanings of local rituals for urban audiences in Taiwan, I will investigate how she translates these cultural meanings for her global audiences.

## 2. The encounter between the untranslatable *Jiao* and translatable *Mirrors of Life*

[43] Dirlik, "Place-Based Imagination: Globalism and the Politics of Place." p23

Different from its Chinese title *Jiao* that directly connects the dance piece to local religious practices of "Jiao", the French and English translations of its title*, Miroirs de Vie* and *Mirrors of Life,* implicitly call attention to the meeting between several dualisms: the dead and the living, the female and the male, and as I suggest, the East and the West. In psychologist Jacques Lacan's theory of the "Mirror stage" of human development, the subject's identification process takes shape in this phase from "insufficiency to anticipation" in which the partial and objectified self which is reflected on the mirror constitutes the fantastic concept of a whole subjectivity[44]. In other words, it is the double of the self (or selves) as the "other" that produces the "subject-self" by ingraining the concept of differentiation. In Lin's *Jiao*, the power of mirroring suggests a reflection of the other, but the same time objectifies it. For example, the story of the spiritual is a reflection of the lived world, the mercy of the female is a reflection of the greedy male, and the beautified (ritual) East is a reflection of the capitalized (modern) West.

Further, the mirroring space of the "doubled" may not necessarily be a binary; rather, it could be a liminal space of either-or and neither-nor. By this I mean that *Mirrors of Life* neither provides appreciation of its local ritual "Jiao" nor performs itself as a created theater work, but has the potential to allow and to be interpreted according to different ways of reading it and the different places its performed. I suggest that this choreography is set in "the third space[45]" between untranslatable *Jiao* and translated (translatable) *Mirrors of Life*, an interplay which intends to (but mostly fails to) make

[44] Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I.," in *Écrits: A Selection* (1977). p3-4.

[45] Homi K. Bhabha, *The location of culture*, Routledge classics (London ; New York: Routledge, 2004).

local memories a part of global remembrance. The creation of this ambiguous space is strategic as it grants *Jiao* the currency to survive on different stages, which is especially apparent in Lin's aesthetic use of the "original" and "oriental" dancing body.

Initially, Legend Lin Dance Theater garnered a great deal of attention abroad and had more opportunities to perform in Europe than in Taiwan. Although Lin's first staging of *Jiao* in 1995 raised some discussions in Taiwan, the excitement over her dance aesthetic faded as the frequency of her new productions. *Jiao* was selected to perform at several well-known international art festivals, such as the biannual Marnes River Valley Dance Festival (1997) and the Avignon Arts Festival (1998) in France. With her two works *Mirrors of Life* (*Jiao*) and *Anthem to Fading Flowers* touring Europe, the French ARTE Channel selected Lee-Chen Lin as one of the eight most influential choreographers of the world in 2002, along with other famous choreographers such as Bill T. Jones and Jiří Kylián, and invited LLDT to perform *Anthem to Fading Flowers* on the TV program "Dance Celebration." Lee-Chen Lin's specific aesthetic and creative works won positive affirmations and applauses from European audiences.

In intercultural encounters like international arts festivals, very little local information is provided to their global audience. Except the for explanation of "Jiao" in the English Program as "a Taoist ritual held in Ghost Festival," its French and English programs mostly promoted *Mirrors of Life* as a mythic, oriental, ritual-theater work without detailing any information about its religious context. Of course, Lin does not claim that *Mirrors of Life* "represents" local rituals, but it is indisputable that its whole premise resides on the context and meaning of "Jiao" and the Ghost Festival despite its

surrealistic style. In other words, its local religious meanings and its underlying philosophical conceptions of the world, humankind, and spirituality, may be hardly made known to its global audience. In this sense, the encounter between *Mirrors of Life* and its global audience may be merely appreciated as a beautiful fantasy between the West and the East.

For example, the interactions between the female (the Bride) and the male (Her Lover) could easily lead *Mirrors of Life* to be misinterpreted as a fantasy thus displacing the local meaning of "Jiao" as a feast for the ghosts, in the process of gaining global appreciation. The meeting between the female and the male is not unlike the meeting of the East and the West, which is an untouchable intimacy and spiritual fantasy at the moment, a love affair and a temporal encounter in the liminal space of the theater. The classical, whitened, and docile female body easily slips into the role of the object of the Western gaze because she fits into the stereotype of an ideal Asian femininity.

Also, the whole performance of *Mirrors of Life* may be interpreted as a feeling of a mythic, exotic, and spiritual unknown place in the orient, which further fulfills a nostalgic projection of the East as the past of humankind. For instance, the wild shaking, uncontrolled energy and trance performance of male bodies reify the stereotype of "primitive" rituals outside the West. The wildness may display a kind of masculinity that is otherwise largely absent in the basic overall tone of this piece, but it is set as the expression of malevolent violence and of ghosts in the trance state (which is liminal and therefore a space of potentiality, according to Turner's definition)[46], and is generally

[46] In his book *From Ritual to Theatre*, Victor Turner focuses on the different functions and stages of "social

interpreted as an “abnormal” articulation of the Asian male body.

Lee-Chen Lin’s *Jiao* is grounded in a local Taiwanese cultural context with its firmly rooted bodies in motion, but *Mirrors of Life* unavoidably has to re-root/reroute itself in the global flows of influence and capital moving along with it the oriental/original body, which may make it accessible to global cultural elites. In the touring performance, the fantasy of *Mirrors of Life* is translated, with an integration of mixed “oriental” styles, in order to appeal and communicate to a broader global audience. The local meaning of *Jiao* is not easily mediated in an already transformed cultural space as it moves through the boundaries of a seemingly borderless place, between the local and the global.

## II. Oriental Avant-Garde as a Reflection and a Self-Positioning

The successful touring the *Mirrors of Life* at the 1998 Avignon Arts Festival in France was greatly supported by the state of Taiwan. The Taiwanese government packaged *Mirrors of Life* with five other Taiwanese performing arts groups, which was then labeled: “Avignon Made in Taiwan.” Legend Lin Dance Theater caught the attention and interest of many audiences and from there began to build up its reputation as an “oriental” ritual theater group from Taiwan, obtaining other international invitations and recognition in the years that followed. In fact, Legend Lin Dance Theater may be more

drama,” both in tribal and industrial society, by analyzing the different passages in the rituals of non-western communities to articulate his finding of the valuable status of “in-betweeness,” liminality. Turner holds a very optimistic attitude about the liminality of cultural performance, where the process of being in-between states creates a status of ambivalence and the possibility of transformation . Accordingly, this space has the potential of “anti-structure . please see Turner, *From ritual to theatre: the human seriousness of play*. p44-46.

well-known internationally than it is inside Taiwan due to its limited number of productions and performances in the country since 1995, and considering Taiwan's modest market for dance appreciation.

Due to the difficult and indefinite political status of Taiwan, Taiwanese choreographers have long been asked to take on the roles of "cultural animateurs" in order to compete with other locals for global visibility. It is often argued that nation-states will decay in the radiant rise of globalization; however, the idea of the nation-state has not disappeared in the global circulation of capital. Instead, the nation-state has transformed into a model that "distinguishes state from nation", in which "state manages the global flows of capitals to maintain its geo-political-economical privileges."[47] As a result, the Taiwanese government transforms itself into an agent that incorporates local difference into global circulation and, in this case, Taiwanese artists' works have been grouped into the promotion of "oriental" innovations.

However, as I discussed in the chapter two on the "Eastern body aesthetic," this creative direction in Taiwan is often considered and criticized as self-orientalizing, as catering to the needs of the nation-state, and as conforming to the cultural tastes of the West[48]. However, as I traced the roots and routes that Lin has taken and as I pieced together the different possible readings and relationships therein— the local-the metropolitan, the local-the global, and the East-the West—it becomes clear not only how

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[47] Mike Featherstone, "Localism, Globalism and Cultural Identity," in *Global/Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary*, ed. R. Wilson and W. Dissanayake (Durham: Duke UP, 1996). p64.

[48] Ya-Ping Chen's dissertation (2003); Ya-Tin Lin, "Towards Constructing a Nation? Taiwanese Folk Ritual on International Concert Stage.," in *Dialogues om Dance Discourse: Creating Dance in Asia pacific*, ed. Mohd Anis Md Nor. (Kuala Lumpur: Cultural Center of University of Malaya, 2007).p15-32

Lin critically re-conceptualizes the dancing body, but also how she actively positions herself with the Eastern/the original as her base. In other words, her conception of the "Eastern" grows from her life experiences— from her interests in Taoist philosophy, from her own interpretations of art and of life— and is consciously chosen as the premise of her artistic creations. After examining the local-global configurations present in *Jiao*, I want to further investigate how Taiwanese choreographers paradoxical position themselves as part of the Oriental Avant-Garde performances.

1. **Global Avant-Garde Performance**

In his article "The Future of Ritual", Richard Schechner reflects on Grotowski's anthropological approach and cultural globalism as "unavoidable expressions of Western hegemony" to "harvest the world's cultures." [49] He points out the underlying universalism of Grotowski's approaches that may erase the cultural specificity that has been trained and rooted in different cultural practices. However, Schechner holds his belief that these "Avant-Garde" experiments are exclusively Euro-American innovations, regardless of their intercultural "inspirations" and their creators' collaborations with the artists and professional "others". In distinguishing different threads of Avant-Garde Theater, he argues that "the historical avant-garde took shape in Europe during the last decades of the nineteenth century. It soon spread to other places around the world."[50] However, in rethinking the "avant-garde" performances of western experimental theater

[49] Richard Schechner, *The future of ritual : writings on culture and performance*, New edition edition ed. (London ; New York :: Routledge, 1995). p257

[50] ———, *The future of ritual : writings on culture and performance* (London ; New York :: Routledge, 1993). p5-6

history I suggest that it seems to rely heavily on borrowing from various “others” to revolutionize the western theater tradition and therefore invent a product of intercultural hybridity, entitled (western) Avant-Garde Theater. If I were to employ a universalist approach and ignore cultural contexts, the Avant-Garde Theater in China could be tracked back to the imperial encounter of the nineteenth century when European intellectuals started to use western Spoken Drama to “civilize” Chinese theater traditions while employing specific bodily movements out of their contexts. This might also be considered an “Avant-Garde” move regarding the radical progress in its historical and local cultural context at that time.

This claim parallels dance scholar Priya Srinivasan’s analysis of the early development of modern dance in the United States. As Srinivasan argues, Ruth St Denis’s white female body gave her the ability to “stage various kinds of oriental dance” re-choreograph them and “mediate between East and West”[51] exploiting oriental desire under its safe new name, modern dance—a property registered to the white body. Therefore, this orientalist appropriation was concealed under modernity and freedom and became the model of progress as well as a model of the female body. Furthermore, as Dance Scholar Yutian Wong argues, the authority of modern dancers replaced its Asian-ness with white-ness since it was proclaimed to be the work of white women’s inspiration[52]. This is how modern dance became the product of modernity both in the

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[51] Priya Srinivasan, "The Bodies Beneath the Smoke or What's Behind the Cigarette Poster: Unearthing Kinesthetic Connection in American Dance History," *Discourses in Dance* (2007)., p18

[52] Yutian Wang, "Towards a New Asian American Dance Theory: Locating the Dancing Asian American Body," *Discourses in Dance* 1.1(2002). p81.

West and then in the East, without reflecting upon the masked appropriation of "the oriental."

James M. Harding, in the chapter "From Cutting Edge to Rough Edges: On the Transnational Foundations of Avant-Garde Performance," argues for a concept of a transnational avant-garde and makes a case for "the notion of simultaneity" in order to "clarify the avant-grade as a deterritorialized phenomenon."[53] By emphasizing the "global simultaneity" of the avant-garde, he wants to offer credit to the various avant-garde expressions emerging all over the world, as a "transnational" and "deterritorialized phenomenon."[54] He critiques the lack of scholarship about avant-grade theater work created outside Europe and the United States, and claims that the history of this ignorance is constructed through an unbalanced power relationship in which the Euro-American culture takes a privileged position in these transnational flows of ideas and performances.

Taking Harding's argument further, I consider Lee-Chen Lin's *Jiao* a global avant-garde expression because Lin challenges the performance traditions and forms of both Chinese and Western Theater in Taiwan, and investigates the themes of the body, rooted in nostalgia, which moves along with and simultaneously resists the deterritorialized flows of Avant-Garde practices. In the previous sections, I discussed how Lin relocates the dancing body based on her transformations of Taoist philosophy and of

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[53] James Martin Harding and John Rouse, *Not the other avant-garde : the transnational foundations of avant-garde performance*, Theater--theory/text/performance (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006). p22

[54] Ibid. p22

life experiences in Taiwan. Lin's local connection with the land and with the Taiwanese community grounds her work with depth, while her global connections and her aesthetic and artistic tastes provide her work with agency, which I will discuss later.

### 2. Oriental Avant-Garde as (self)-positioning

The term "Oriental Avant-Garde" was not officially proposed and promoted as a popular slogan and artistic concept until the Taipei International Arts Festival in 2005. However the concept of "Oriental as(is) Avant-Garde," or reversely "Avant-Garde is Oriental," began to take shape and can be traced back to "the oriental body aesthetic" of the 1990s, in which several theater and dance groups were welcomed and praised by western critics in their "oriental" but "non-traditional" performances. Similarly, the collection of Taiwanese performing arts groups in the Avignon Arts Festival was mostly chosen according to their "oriental/original basis," regardless of the Taiwanese government emphasis on its theme "Made in Taiwan." As a result, the concept of "Oriental Avant-Garde" has been a common description used to promote, circulate, and represent Legend Lin Dance Theater's works.

Even though Lin emphasizes her connection with local Taiwanese culture, her work is in fact grounded in Eastern (or more precisely in the East Asian) aesthetics as a subject position. As I have already outlined, Lin's performance style follows most closely the principles of Taoist philosophy and Japanese Butoh (both of which are popular with, and frequently interpreted by, Western and Taiwanese cultural elites) instead of transforming the more "vulgar", collective, and "folk" elements present in local Taiwanese practices. Recognizing these critical reflections on Lin's choreography in *Jiao*, I argue that it is also

her strategy to negotiate with a problematic subject position between “The East” and “The West”.

What I want to detail here is the layered difference between the construction of the “Oriental body” and the “Taiwanese body”. If we talk about exclusive definition of A “Taiwanese” body—a definition that would exclude any cultural influences such as Chinese, Japanese and Western colonial and imperial cultures—there is no such an “original” body to be found. But when we talk about the “Oriental body”, even in the context of Taiwan, it applies to an imaginary “Asian-Self” and may most closely resemble to quality depicting classical, slow, and pristine qualities frequently associated with Japanese aesthetics. The international influence and visibility of the Japanese Butoh aesthetic has replaced the concept of “the oriental” and of other Asians in western discourses and canonizations of Asian experimental performing arts.

The concept of the “Oriental Avant-Garde” grants an autonomous authority and a localized attachment that Taiwanese artists may want to claim, while it also reminds Taiwanese artists of a global character that they may need to consider. On the one hand, this artistic shift encourages Taiwanese choreographers to re-conceptualize their bodies and their local culture, which may produce a new subject position. On the other hand, this wrapping and packaging of “oriental” performances in promotional materials may further ritualize Asian bodies and divert to the western gaze. As the paradoxical term “Oriental Avant-Garde” suggests, Lin’s choreography has to perform Oriental-Other in order to claim the Avant-Garde-Self to its global audience. Her specific bodily aesthetic is conceived as an Avant-Garde innovation, because she transforms Taoist philosophy and

local ritual into a ritual theater work. Yet, Lin has to articulate the inner operations of the "original" body and the untranslatable ritual belief into externally visual dynamics in order to lead her audience into this journey of an "oriental" spiritual experience.

Furthermore, western Avant-Garde theater longs to find an alternative form of theater in the ritual of "others," believing it to function as their lost past and to be a source for constructing critiques of western theater traditions. But what does a Taiwanese choreographer like Lee-Chen Lin long for? In other words, why does Lin have to reconstruct the "oriental" body as an "original" body in her re-envisioning of a Taiwanese self? Also, for whom does Lin create this nostalgic rediscovery of the body? Is Lin's approach similar to Western experimental theorists or even a replication of their ritual-theater influences?

Asking these questions, I further argue that it is improper to draw from the theory of Orientalism to critique the self-orientalized body in Lin's training and Lin's work *Jiao*, as well as in the work of other Taiwanese choreographers. With the concepts of westernization and modernization so entangled in Taiwanese society, the reflectivity of Taiwanese artists unavoidably leads them to what Julie Kristeva refers to as "abjection,"[55] refusing to copy and expelling the modern (read: westernized) body in order to rediscover their ideal, unpolluted, images of self, even though such a thing does not exist. This self-questioning and exploration guides Lin's approach to the spiritual body in the liminal space. The material body is abandoned and in its place we find the binary ideology of

[55] I draw this concept from Shimakawa's extension of Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection in to racial encounters. Karen Shimakawa, *National abjection : the Asian American body on stage* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

eastern spirituality in opposition to western technology. I will further discuss her binary positioning in relation to another dichotomy, the Female and the Male, in next section.

## 2**. Laboring on the Re-theorizing the "Original" Body**

Departing from western techniques, Lin constructs her bodily aesthetic from her own training methods in order to realize an "original" Taiwanese body. In her arguments about choreography and performance, dance scholar Susan Foster points out that while a "dancer cultivates the body through training", his or her anatomical body is not designated as male or female "but appear[s] as one of two sexes" through codified movements[56]. Although Foster's discussion focuses on complicating the sexual identity of the dancing body, I would like to borrow from her argument here to suggest that the Taiwanese body is not meant to be "ritualized" or "orientalized." Instead, it is by training, re-conceptualizing, and cultivating the body, that it appears to be this idealized "original" body.

Lin's training system paradoxically attempts to reduce dance techniques through training, in order to present an idealized, "ritual" and "Eastern" body. Although it seems counterintuitive to "reduce technique through training," this is the very contradiction that I want to call attention to. Audiences tend to forget that dancers do not naturally move in a particular way or simply reflect their "original" body; in creating the appearance of an "original" body, a dancer must train to adopt the perceived movement characteristics of an "Eastern" body. Lin's insistence on eliminating westernized dance techniques from her choreography is embodied in her training system. But these dancing bodies are still the

[56] Susan Foster, p7

result of the intensive training; it is just another kind of training—"Eastern" training— in order to reconstruct an elusive "original" Taiwanese body. Problematically, the Taiwanese body has to be trained to present its "ritual-ness" and, accordingly, its "oriental-ness" to be conceived as its "original-ness" in the global context.

However, the undoing and re-doing in this training should be considered in terms of labor. The arduous labor exerted for the sake of the slow, smooth, and beautiful movements in Lin's *Jiao* is often easily ignored. In her conference paper "Dancing Indian Diaspora: Mapping Transnational Labor Flows," dance scholar Priya Srinivasan discusses how in the United States, Bharata Natyam, a form of Indian classical dance, is caught in the transnational flows of capital and in the dancers' bodily labors as performed on stage. She argues for a reconsideration of this kind of laboring in the era of late capitalism and for further investigations of "the dancer's own bodily labor through sweat and muscular work to the material objects that construct the Bharata Natyam dancer's body." However, rather than examining the transformation of Lin's *Jiao* from labor to capital, I consider Lin's "Haun" approach to the body in the era of globalization as a resistance, which I will discuss later. In the meantime, I would like to rethink the way the dancers labor in order to maintain the supposedly "natural" Eastern body, in particular, how Lin's use of "Huan" motion emphasizes the efforts present in re-cultivating and retaining the "original" body of these Taiwanese dancers.

If we recall Lin's signature walking technique that I discussed in section one, we might feel physical empathy when watching the laboring dancers even as an audience member sitting comfortably in the theater. However, if one never takes Lin's training

class, one may not have the kinesthetic knowledge to understand the extent of the dancers' own laborious experience. The concentrated focus on "the Core," which is the basis for her technique's idealized and original state of the body, should lead the whole body and produce a consequentially regenerated energy that allows the movement to happen. But most dancers admitted that even if they can notice changes and improvements in their daily practices, it takes at least five-years of training for one's body to digest and to really enter Lin's conceptualization of body[57]. One dancer explained the great difficulty of performing a seemingly simple motion; she describes the arduousness of kneeling onto the floor while moving downstage, keeping hold of a red cloth in her hand at a precise angle and maintaining a parallel relationship with the dancer opposite her[58]. In other words, the process of training and of staging this specific moving is a sequence of labor performed by the dancers, through which the Eastern body is articulated.

### 3. Oriental Avant-Garde as Positionality

Although it is arguable that Lin's transformation of the Taiwanese body into an oriental body is a means to construct cultural capital in this late phase of capitalism, I would like to discuss her insistence on utilizing the "*Huan* (slow/postpone/defer/delay/revive)" walks and on oriental philosophy as a resistance to the fast flows of capital in modern life. Lin emphasizes that her philosophy of "*Huan*",

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[57] Hsiu-Hsia Wu. Personal Interview. October, 2010. Ming-Jing Wu. Personal Interview. October, 2010. Chien-Wen Cheng. Personal Interview. October, 2010

[58] In the scene of "Preparation", six dancers bring the red cloth floating toward the front. Hsiu-Hsia Wu. Personal Interview. October, 2010. Ming-Jing Wu. Personal Interview. October, 2010

often misinterpreted as simply "slow," is not an inactive low speed or a non-reaction, but a kind of "slow" that also includes the concept of delay, revive, and respond after deep consideration. She asserts that her "*Huan*" can bring powerful actions and reactions if needed. In other words, her definition of "*Huan*" is set in opposition to the blind rush, and careless decisions and actions that characterize busy modern life.

Her aesthetic of "*Huan*" can be considered as a resistance or opposition to the fast flow of global capital. The self-awareness in Lin's choreography can be seen as an attempt to locate one's physical body in the uprooted flows of globality. Her aesthetic of "*Huan*" walking signifies her resistance toward modernization. In a state of self-awareness, the dancing body of *Jiao* kept the "*Huan*" walking movements in a sincere state of meditation and of self-reflection. Walking with full-hearts, spirits and bodies highlights the importance of self-reflection on one's physical and spiritual location.

The quality of "*Huan*" is also revealed through her insistence on slow-paced productions that counter the logic of capitalism. She has only choreographed two works in the last ten years, which she meticulously designs and composes. She not only conducted ethnographic works on local rituals, but also spent time working with her dancers through her training methods and bodily experience in local rituals. This insistence makes it difficult for her to sustain regular funding from the Taiwanese government, so she has to target global, western audiences at international festivals that allow her to perform the same repertoire in different locations, instead of surviving in the very small market of Taiwanese audiences. The attitude of slow self-awareness is a

rooting specific to her own position.

Moreover, Lin's use of "*Huan*" does not proceed at a fixed speed but instead with an awareness of positionality. Different dancing bodies onstage have to sense and to act according to their relationships with others. One subject is always positioned in relation to the other in Lin's mapping of the whole scene. At the moment of an encounter, although it may be at a distance, the opened sensational body has to appreciate and to savor the existence of the other subject. The reflective relationality in Lin's positioning of different subjects onstage includes material objects such as cloths and reed flowers because Lin believes that everything has its own spirit and therefore is alive. Lin's emphasis on the inter-subjectivity of relationships does not simply assemble an image of coherence in terms of moving in exactly the same time, but rather frames her utopic vision of harmony, in response to Taoist philosopher Chuang-Tzu's argument that following one's nature is Dao."

Therefore, Lin's approaches of relationality can also be reconfigured to analyze her positioning in the East in relation to the West, in which the oriental and the Avant-Garde are constructed in a particular but unfixed route. Positioning her interpretation of oriental philosophy and training methodology to approach an innovative creation that is recognizable and appreciable by western criteria, Lin strategically maintains a sensitive adjustment and balance in designing her subject position. Her longing for an ideal oriental body does not present an obstacle, but rather supports, her entrance into mainstream discourses looking to find new ways of theorizing the dancing body. Her reconceptualization of the dancing body and the timing of "*Huan*" engage with her

resistance to technological and fast moving conditions of post-modernism, while at the same time her nostalgic body evokes an imagined ideal and spiritual world, which is shared for global audiences' appreciations.

# Conclusion

This dissertation tracks Taiwanese dancing bodies which are constantly searching, articulating, and theorizing in response to multiple nostalgias generated from various senses of displacement, migration, and relocation, and experienced at different historical moments in Taiwan. It explores some of the ways that Taiwanese women choreographers and dancers have engaged with historical materials, ethnographical archives, embodied experiences, and their imaginations and artistic skills to create contemporary "traditional" dances of Taiwan. It argues that they generate different inquiries, from how to perform Chineseness in the historical past, to how to identify a Taiwanese grounded present, to how to interweave local cultural practices with as well as against global flows for a future. The "traditional" Taiwanese dancing body, it argues, is entangled with joys, desires, longings, and hopes.

Focusing on specific works staged by these two dance companies, Taipei Folk Dance Theater and Legend Lin Dance Theater, enables me to tease out these many issues. I look carefully at two dance pieces and demonstrate how these female Taiwanese choreographers, employing different approaches, both incorporate local religious

elements to construct their position as Asian Artists in the globalization era. As choreographers who already inhabit a geopolitically marginal position in Taiwan, Li-Huian Tsia and Lee-Chen Lin, I argue, concern themselves with both local authority and global accessibility in their differing choreographic strategies. They both appreciate and recognize the importance of cultural experiences at the local level, enabling their ability to represent both living experiences and cultural memories in dance choreographies. Being part of their family memory and life experience, these local cultures constitute their subjectivities as Taiwanese artists. They re-experience local religious activity, transforming it for the stage as they claim a local position, aligning themselves, through the local, with the concerns of humanity and spirituality that are often ignored in the fragmented world of global capitalism.

Tsai's choreography emphasizes a more "authentic" representation of local ritual as it relates to her ethnographic research. In making the piece I discuss, she incorporated her observations and experiences of the Ma-Zu pilgrimage and its prayers, which express her yearning for a closer relationship among people in local society. Tsai staged the vivid and touching scenarios based on her orthodox research and her nostalgic yearning for an alternative living relationship. Instead of simply placing these local performances on

stage, she incorporated different dance techniques and choreographic aesthetics to revise and to extend the concept of the Taiwanese dancing body. Maintaining the form of the religious practice, she claimed the local culture as her place of authority to choreograph Taiwanese folk dance for both local and urban appropriation.

Differently, Lin's choreography constructs an oriental ritual theater work, using her interpretations and transformations of local religious beliefs to appeal to a global cultural taste that disturbs the self-image of Taiwan. The incorporation of religious symbols on stage is to produce the atmosphere of a spiritual world in theater, rather than represent what it was in the local. Positioning her interpretation of oriental philosophy and training methodology to approach an innovative creation, Lin strategically maintains a sensitive adjustment and balance in designing her subject position. Her reconceptualization of a dancing body and the slow and revised timing of "*Huan*" engage with her resistance to the technological and fast moving pace of the post-modern condition, while, at the same time, her nostalgic body calls up an imagination of an oriental and spiritual world, which may satisfy global audiences in the West.

In positioning the two Taiwanese choreographers within the cultural politics between Taiwan and China, between Taiwan and Asia, between the East and the West, I argue that

what emerges is a place-based concern, in which both choreographers explore how the local is staged in composition with the global. Regarding the global market, both Tsai and Lin are aware of the importance of representing and staging Taiwan in the mapping of the world— as Taiwanese, as a branch of Chinese, as Asian and/or as "the oriental" to confront with a western gaze. Their works target different fields and audiences: Tsai works in the overseas Chinese community and international folk dance festivals, while Lin works in the international avant-garde dance festivals. They both take the responsibility as cultural translators and promoters of the local and demonstrate the ways that the local can be valued and appreciated by urban and global audiences. They also offer aesthetic and cultural values to the local culture and increase the awareness and resources of local cultural practices.

Both choreographers re-conceptualize the dancing body in their approaches to engaging with their nostalgia(s) for staging their ideal world. They provide a new understanding of the body moving though the coexistence of time and space in theater and in life. It is not simply a search for the particular of the local, but a careful renewing the present-past (experience) in conjunction with the future-present (expectation)[1]. In

[1] I draw the two categories from Reinhart Koselleck in Boym's discussion: space of experience and

other words, rather than simply longing for the past in opposition to the ideology of progress as in Svetlana Boym's discussion of nostalgia, I suggest, instead, that these choreographers engage with a constant self-reflection in motion that keeps the body grounded while moving. This, as shown in the two choreographers' choreographic strategies, I suggest, is a way to accumulate new expectations by which the future is articulated and revived from the present.

Employing different resistive choreographic strategies, to use dance scholar Ananya Chatterjea's term[2], both choreographers use the Taiwanese dancing body as discursive power to challenge the western division of "traditional" dance and "modern" dance as well as the definition of cultural tradition and autonomous innovation. Their approach suggests that the concept of "contemporary" should be reconsidered and revised in the ways it is implemented to recognize the critical potential of dance creations from the non-west. In recent years, the next generation of Taiwanese choreographers has moved further away from grand narratives of nationalism(s) and beyond the boundedness of the

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horizon of expectation. Boym argues that"nostalgia, as a historical emotion, is a longing for that shrinking "space of experience" that no longer fits the new horizon of expectations."(10). Please see Svetlana Boym, *The future of nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001).

[2] Ananya Chatterjea focuses on the radical works of the two non-western choreographers to investigate their multiple-layered resistances. Please see Ananya Chatterjea, *Butting out : reading resistive choreographies through works by Jawole Willa Jo Zollar and Chandralekha*, 1st ed. (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2004).

traditional. They further situate themselves with individual, contemporary, sentimental experiences in their daily life, in which the local and the global as well as the so-called "tradition" and "modern," are configured differently according to the changing contexts. The Taiwanese dancing body confidently has its root grounded at the location of Taiwan, while it moves frequently and responds fast to the world. Taiwanese subjectivity is constantly articulated in both motions.

The issue of Taiwanese subjectivity has been discussed and deconstructed to critically avoid claiming an essentialized nationhood. However, it is significant for the marginal groups of Taiwan, in terms of ethnicity, class, and cultural affiliation[3], to articulate subject positions in ways that both connect with and resist the financialization of the cultures[4] in globalization. For example, the Indigenous Peoples of Taiwan, as marginal groups in comparison to the Han majority, still long for their cultural traditions and struggle for their authority to represent their own cultures. On one hand, they seek global connection with other aboriginal nations and bring their cultural performance on

[3] For example, in dance field of Taiwan, the new immigrants, most of them are women who migrate from southeastern Asian countries and China to Taiwan for marriages, do not have much opportunity to perform or to be involved with artistic creations. Their cultural significance is often devalued in Taiwan due to their economic and racial status.

[4] Postcolonial scholar Gayatri Chakravory Spivak argues that "financialization is the secret of globalization." (331). Please see G.C. Spivak, "Cultural Talks in the Hot Peace: Revisiting the'Global Village.'," *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and feeling beyond the nation* (1998).

global stages to gain international visibility in order to have the power to claim their rights with local government. On the other hand, they have to negotiate the boundary with non-indigenous and international tourists for entering their rituals and ceremonies in order to maintain the economy of their local communities. These indigenous choreographers and directors, in theater and in the communities, engage with nostalgia differently, as a critical position, from other non-indigenous choreographers in Taiwan.

A constant review of local culture is a possible place-based approach to resist the displacement of globalization. This revisit is an attempt to constantly connect artistic transformation to its specific locations, while it also brings in global information to keep the local alive. By exploring how contemporary women choreographers in Taiwan continue to engage with their different longings, I bring Asian female choreographers back into dance discourses and recognize their complicated strategies of choreographing nostalgia(s) that bridge not only the past and the present, but also the local and the global. My (re)search, in this dissertation, on how a body-based imagination constitutes Taiwanese choreographers' strategies is both a historical trace of local memories and a memory of dancing throughout the local histories of Taiwan.

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