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Flirting with Global Citizenship:

The Construction of Gender, Class, and National Identity in Taiwanese Salsa Practice

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements

for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Culture and Performance

by

I-Wen Chang

2015

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Flirting with Global Citizenship:

The Construction of Gender, Class, and National Identity in Taiwanese Salsa Practice

by

I-Wen Chang

Doctor of Philosophy in Culture and Performance

University of California, Los Angeles, 2015

Professor Janet M O'Shea, Chair

This study investigates how dancing salsa emerges as a strategy to address issues of gender, class, and national identity formation in a transnational context, with a focus on Taiwan. I examine the globalization of salsa as a cosmopolitan dance, the intersubjective experience in partner dance, and the ways that gender and national identities are choreographed through salsa's transnational circuits. In order to trace the trajectory of agency in Taiwanese salsa practice, I propose and develop two special theoretical terms: flow and flirtation. This new approach challenges the individual emphasis of much applied phenomenology by looking at how salsa allows for a multiplicity of intersubjective experiences. By reading salsa as a site of body politics, I argue that salsa enables Taiwanese dancers to flirt with a temporary and imagined identity.

I examine identity formation in Taiwan in relation to a changing, culturally and historically constructed body (Confucian body, modern body, combative and national body). By contrasting salsa with a genealogy of Taiwanese corporeal conformity, I investigate how

salsa provides a semi-sanctioned space for rule-breaking in Taiwan. I argue that Taiwanese salsa practitioners embody exoticism and eroticism as an alternative strategy to dominant Chinese norms that mandate a highly sedate and regulated use of the body. I examine the embodied sovereignty by Taiwanese salsa practitioners. Salsa enables Taiwanese dancers to imagine a future characterized by a global citizenship rooted in Western modernity. This soft resistance is especially useful for Taiwanese who are in a precarious nation-state position to differentiate themselves from a Chinese identification.

This project is centered on my archival research, and ethnographic fieldwork of salsa practice and performance in Taiwan, Los Angeles, and Shanghai. I ground my argument in the combination of choreographic analysis, national and transnational discourses, cultural studies, and intercultural performance analysis. I look at specific examples, including salsa performances and art works by Larry Shao, Japanese salsa music by *Orquesta de la Luz*, and the salsa version of *the Rite of Spring* by Emanuel Gat. My research intervenes in critical interdisciplinary theories of phenomenology, dance and performance studies, East Asian Studies, and gender studies.

The dissertation of I-Wen Chang is approved.

Susan L. Foster

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2015

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A Brief History of Taiwan

- Taiwan's original inhabitants are Malayo-Polynesian indigenes
- 1544 Portuguese sailors named Taiwan Ilha formosa (beautiful island)
- 1624 Dutch colonization of southern Taiwan
- 1640s Chinese immigrants from the South East China moved to Taiwan
- 1662 Koxiga (Zheng Chenggon 鄭成功) of Ming dynasty China defeated the Dutch, and set up an exile government on Taiwan after fleeing the Manchu (Qing) empire conquest of China
- 1683 Qing forces from China seize Taiwan
- 1885 Taiwan became a province of Qing dynasty (China)
- 1895 China ceded Taiwan to Japan after Japan defeated the Qing dynasty (China) in the first Sino-Japanese War
- 1945 End of World War II. Taiwan was given back from Japan to the Chinese Nationalist (KMT) government of the Republic of China (ROC) ruled by Chiang Kai-Shek
- 1947 Mass protest during the February 28th Incident leads to KMT government's massacre of 20,000 Taiwanese
- 1948 Chinese Communist defeated the MKT in the Chinese civil war and found the People's Republic of China (PRC) in mainland; KMT transferred government and troops from mainland China to Taiwan; KMT declare of the Martial Law in Taiwan
- 1971 The United Nations expelled the ROC diplomats from Taiwan and replaced them with representatives form the PRC from mainland China
- 1979 The United State switched its diplomatic recognition from the ROC in Taiwan to PRC in mainland China
- 1986 Political activists of the Democratic Opposition established the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)
- 1987 KMT government lifted Martial Law in Taiwan
- 1996 Lee Teng-hui won the first direct president election; Lee characterized the relationship between the ROC and PRC as "a special state-to-state relationship;" PRC suspended its semiofficial cross-strait talks with the Taiwanese government

- 2000 Chen Shui-bian from DDP was elected as the president
- 2008 Ma Ying-jeou from KMT was elected as the president; beginning of pro-China policy economically and politically
- 2014 Sunflower Movement against the pro-China policy of the KMT government

Introduction

How to make it to the Dance Floor: Choreographing Salsa in Taiwan

Scene One: Let's Go Salsa Dancing

Salsa begins in the wardrobe. I stand in front of my closet, looking at my array of dresses. I hesitate. Do I feel a little bit pink tonight? Am I purple- passionate and noble? Do I slip on a long elegant dress or slide the hem up just a few more inches? I always want to keep my partner wondering after all. I want to tease his eyes, confronting him with my skillful dance moves. After a brief perusal, I find the perfect choice. It's a short crimson dress with elegantly detailed lace that hugs my curves. It unleashes my soft femininity without restraining my vibrancy. I turn to my make up, which is itself a pre-salsa ritual. Extending my eyelashes, and lining my eyes with silver and black paint, I look somewhat foreign and intriguing. I add a final touch: a red lipstick that complete my transformation. My partner will not be able to resist my subtle seduction.

The night begins. It's 10pm. While some of the people of the city are finding their way home, I have just begun my night of fun and excitement. Strangers pass by, exhausted, leaving their work behind but I stride through the streets toward my destination. The streets are well lit, the buildings are tall, and there seems to be no sign that the buzz will stop. I find my way into the bar "Brown Sugar" to be greeted by familiar faces. They're regulars, like me. We hug, a show of comfort and community. It is only a matter of time before we make it to the dance floor. An extended hand invites me to follow. I take hold and walk through the dimly lit floor that keeps an air of mystery, and I can almost smell the excitement in the air with tropical fruit smell. A Latin jazz band play the familiar songs of romantic salsa, creating the atmosphere of soft, tender, and relaxation. The female foreign singer sings in Spanish. Her

deep voice is powerful and full of emotion. People stand around drinking mojitos, chatting with each other. I feel like I am on a Caribbean island. I join the crowds, waiting for the moments of arrival.

He takes hold of me by the hand, the basic moves flows like water. I mirror his steps as he does mine. He pushes the ground, creating a waving motion. I style with a dainty hand on my hip, as he brings my other hand up in the air. He is initiating a turn. I step back, swinging my hand above my forehead, then around, and trace it down my cheek keeping the attention on me. He pulls me under his arm and turns me full circle. Moving forward, I move my hips opposite my step, sensuously moving through space. I can hardly wait for him to give me the next cue so that I can show off what I worked so hard to present. I'm attentive to his movement, listening with my hands to his subtle suggestions. He preps and I turn. He releases and I style. He lets go and I improvise. Next, we switch rules. I gesture my arms, touching along my face and along my torso, dancing a performed seductiveness. I undulate my upper body and swivel my hips. I am dancing with a quick, precise, and staccato footwork to show my prowess. I assert my power by dancing a fast moving solo. He responds to me accordingly to my moves. The music plays and we are its physical manifestation. All around us, women, men, dancers, everyone are twirling, rhythmically gesturing their hands, and swaying their hips lost in the music, the movements, and the moment.

Salsa dancing involves seduction and flirtation, both real and performed. This seduction relies on conventional markers of desire and sexual appeal. Both men and women can dance and move in a way to show off their sexiness. However, this performed sexiness carries the real possibility of seduction. It is a “pretending,” as if playing a game, a role, and a character. This salsa dance game is a series of interactions (body movements and facial expressions)

between two or more people that follow a predictable pattern. Because it is a game, the risk is low. Since the risk is low, anyone who participates can have fun because the outcome does not really matter. Thus this performed seduction, flirtation, and sexiness become enjoyments for the practitioner. This temporarily performed sexual desire offers an opportunity for enjoyment and freedom to experiment with eroticism especially in a conservative society where public desire is a taboo. We can see that although salsa still relies on conventional masculinity and femininity in a couple, it makes a twist to play with a conciliatory resistance to social norms without social disaster.

Therefore, salsa allows for fluidity in the performance of individual and gendered identity. This performed sexiness is not required. For these salsa practitioners, performing sexiness is not just to reinforce the gendered stereotype, but is also a playful enactment. As Appadurai describes, “where there is pleasure there is agency (Appadurai, 1990: 7).” These salsa practitioners flirt with being feminine or masculine in a specific way that allows a negotiable position for soft resistance. Apparent clarity of gender roles are juxtaposed with moments of reversal. Therefore, salsa allows for a particular kind of erotic imagination in this process.

Scene Two: *Esto es Salsa*

He puts on his coat, leaving his shirt in plain view. The camera zooms in on his exposed chest hair as he prepares to dance, suggesting a hyper-masculine, Latin sexual identity. He puts on his fedora, completing the look of the suave Latin dancer. The final addition is a seductive gesture of wearing perfume in his neck and the air. He postures up with a big smile, a clear expression of his confidence, and looks directly to the camera. He is ready to begin the dance performance

This is the beginning part of a live performance *Esto es Salsa* that was also documented as video art installation. *Esto es Salsa* is an art piece created and performed by artist and salsa instructor Larry Shao (邵樂人). Shao learned salsa when he studied visual art at the San Francisco Art Institute. He is also the founding member of those who hosted the First International Taipei Salsa Festival in Taiwan in 2007. Salsa music and culture have fascinated Larry Shao for years. The artist launched his career in salsa in 2008, giving weekly lessons, choreographing steps, dances, and giving frequent performances. Shao started integrating salsa into his contemporary art practice. He made several video installations and happening performance with themes relating to salsa.¹ This was unusual in contemporary fine art world and thus he got attention from this side interest. In the 2010 Taipei Biennial—one of the most significant art events in Taiwan—the curator Tirdad Zolghadr invited Shao to commission art works with salsa to focus on the biennial’s theme: an exhibition on the politics of art. What began as an avocation later infiltrated all aspects of his life; it eventually became a source of his income, a lifestyle, a cultural exchange tool, and a source of inspiration for artistic creation. Interestingly, Shao did several contemporary arts experiments with salsa, including a video art project in 2010 Taipei Biennial in Taipei Fine Arts Museum, and a solo art exhibition entitled “salsa” in ITPARK—one of the most famous alternative spaces in Taipei in 2012.

In the live performance version of this piece *Esto Es Salsa*, Shao starts with providing a variety of vegetables and fruits on a huge wood board on the table. He and his dance partner mix salad with various ingredients and sauces on this cutting board. They start cutting vegetables while listening to salsa music. After that they put the wood board with vegetables

¹ Shao has a fine art background and that is why I refer to this piece as a happening performance. A happening is an art term starting in the late 1960s in the field of fine art. It is a performance, event or situation meant to be considered art. Happenings normally occur as multi-disciplinary, with active audience participation.

on the ground, and put another layer of flat wood board on top of it. Once the vegetables and fruits are carefully mixed in between two layers of wood board on the floor, Shao and his dance partner step on top of this wood. Then the salsa music begins, Shao and his partner dance salsa on top of the wood board. While they are dancing the basic salsa moves, such as moving back and forth in a straight line, cross body lead, and girl inside turn, the two layers of wood board become more and more close to each other due to their weight from dancing. After the dance, Shao takes the first layer of wood board away, and carries the button wood board with the just smashed vegetables and fruits to the desk again. These vegetables and fruits are mixed together because of the previous dancing on top of it, and thus eventually become salad. Shao puts all this fresh made salad into a bowl, and adds on spicy sauce. He then invites all the audience to taste the flavor of salad he just “danced.”



FIGURE 0.1. Larry Shao’s performance *Esto Es Salsa*. Photo by I-Wen Chang.

The name “salsa” is the Spanish word for sauce, connoting (in American Spanish) a spicy flavor. It also suggests a "mixture" of ingredients. Shao tells us a story of salsa as a dance form that is like a salsa sauce, combining many different ingredients. His performance enables the audience to think about the mixture that is inherent in the concept of salsa itself. Through the play of making salad (as in the sauce) by salsa dancing, Shao takes the audience to listen, watch, smell, and taste “salsa.” The spicy salsa also tastes hot, and thus suggests a passionate quality of the salsa dance. With an entertaining presence and a relaxed attitude, Shao indicates the quality of salsa as burning and flavorful. He invites the audience to play with the concept of salsa that links to food and music, and to enjoy a dance that is associated with the ideas of exoticism and mixture of roots.

Political dance scholar Marta Savigliano, in her book *Tango and its Political Economy of Passion* (1995), grounds her approach within the context of the “colonizing gaze,” and examines tango history in terms of how its exotic/exoticized representations were constructed and fit into First world desire for passion (Savigliano, 1995). Just as tango can be seen as the political economy of passion that intertwines with the global expansion of imperialism and colonialism, salsa can be regarded as a production of exoticism that resulted from its global commercial expansion. Salsa’s expressive practice is treated as exotic raw material and commoditized for imperial desire. It has been subjected to exoticized representation.

Salsa is exotic to the Taiwanese public, associated with whiteness because it circulates through Western commercial arenas; at the same time it is Latin and black because of its historical roots. Since salsa has become familiar to the Taiwanese through Western media, the exoticism in salsa have multiple layers in Taiwan: it is Latin, it is black, and it is also white. In the US, the exoticism in salsa is associated with old world charm and passionate Latin fire. However, in Taiwan, the exoticism of salsa is perceived as a whitened, civilized salsa due to

its commercial circulation. Because dancing salsa is considered a western and civilized practice, these Taiwanese salsa practitioners perform their first world status by mastering the codes in salsa.

From a fluid gendered performance discussed in scene one, to Shao's salsa performance in scene two, salsa allows its practitioners to imagine an identity that extends from a gender (and a lesser extent sexuality) fluidity to a changing national and international affiliation. Salsa enables its practitioners to perform a transnational form and therefore allows for a set of alliance for its practitioners. In order to understand this transnational imagination, we must first begin to examine the history of salsa to see the concept of mixture of culture, globalization, and cosmopolitanism within the dance form. I will illustrate how salsa offers an imagination and a sense of belonging from the most intimate (personal sexual desire) to the most distant (transnational identification).

The History of Salsa

Salsa is a transnational, transcultural, and globalized dance form that has traveled from the Americas to many other countries and taken on diverse meanings among its participants. It consists of a fusion of dance styles, rooted in the Caribbean, Latin and North America that has already been exoticized and eroticized by North Americans. In short, salsa came into being when Puerto Rican New Yorkers performed Cuban music.

Although tied to Cuba in its origins, salsa music was actually first performed in New York around the mid-to late-1960s by Puerto Rican, Venezuelan, and Dominican musicians. Due to the embargo between Cuba and the US, the music industry in the US had to avoid marketing Cuban recordings. As a result, salsa was introduced as a new marketable Latino

music name to replace the old Cuban song that played in bars.² Salsa differed in sound from other Latin music because of the jazz harmonies included in the orchestrations by skilled music arrangers. Salsa was considered to attract younger and larger audience, and to escape the impression of “old, out of fashion” music (Padura & Clark, 2003: 9).³ In 1968, Dominican composer Johnny Pacheco and Jewish Italian American Jerry Masucci established a musical ensemble named Fania All-Stars and started spreading salsa around the world. These Cuban classics records were often recorded live, giving this music of the 1960s and 1970s a raw, exotic, and spontaneous sound (Manuel, 1995:87). However, this quality vanished in modern commercial salsa as they are now recorded in studios instead of live. By mid-1970, with Fania All-Stars at the forefront, certain images that come to represent a commercial salsa begin to spread, which in large part curiously depended on the exotic, old Cuban song repertoire of 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s (Padura & Clark, 2003: 9). In the 1970s, Celia Cruz together with orchestra leader Tito Puente—a Latin jazz and Salsa musician and best known for dance-oriented mambo and Latin jazz compositions— ignited the “salsa boom” (Cruz, 2004: 130).

The same industry that, after exhausting the “Cuban mode” and “salsa-disco music” in 1970s New York, introduced “erotic salsa” (salsa romantica) in 1980s. Modern *salsa*

² *Son* is the fusion between European and African musical traditions. Its most characteristic instruments are the Cuban guitar known as the *tres*, and the well-known double-headed *bongó*; these are present from the start to the present day. The *son* arose in Oriente, the eastern part of Cuba, merging the Spanish guitar and lyrical traditions with African percussion and rhythms. It moved from Oriente to Havana in about 1909, carried by members of the army, who were sent out of their areas of origin as a matter of policy (Rondon, 2008).

³ For example, according to her autobiography, the salsa queen Celia Cruz points out that in 1969 the Dominican flutist Jonny Pacheco was aware that Hispanic youth did not know how to distinguish between Dominican *meringue*, Colombian *cumbia*, Puerto Rican *bomba*, or Cuban *guaracha* or *guaguanco*. For a musician like Pacheco in New York City, “salsa” fulfilled a need for one word to unify everyone. As a result, Cuba’s music was reborn abroad in the US as “salsa” (Cruz, 2004: 130). In the initial moments of explosion, the new Caribbean dance music— now beginning to be called salsa, a name co-opted to meet the demands for industrial homogenization and marketing of this new artistic product— began to offer this entire gamut of characteristics to revolutionize the image of these trendy musicians and music itself, expressing the constraints of 1960s commodity culture.

romantica was marked by a polished flawless sound produced by multitrack recording where each musician records independently for later mixing (Manuel, 1995: 87). This studio style of production and promotion became a means to reinstate salsa's commercial visibility and popularity for the 1980s (Waxer, 2002:231). In 1987, Ralph Mercado founded Ralph Mercado Music (RMM), further developing *salsa romantica* in New York City and eventually replacing the position once held by Fania Records as the most prominent record company of salsa music (Washburne, 2002: 103). The salsa they produced and promoted emerged with the visual aesthetics of good-looking, young, white or light-skinned singers with conventional sex appeal. Salsa thus became a whitened Hispanic Caribbean music, and its African-Caribbean side was rendered virtually invisible (Washburne, 2002: 103). The dominant commercial salsa style, *salsa romantica*, has proven commercially successful to the Latin music market in the United States and throughout the globe since the 1980s. The effect was that by the end of 1980, almost all Latin American rhythms were categorized under the title "salsa"(Celia, 2004: 131). From the late 1980s onwards, salsa has spread especially intensely worldwide, with concerts and radio shows organized seemingly everywhere. It has been internationally marketed and globally popularized.

The dance movement of salsa originated through the mixture of Mambo,⁴ Danzón, Guaguancó, Cuban Son, and other types of Cuban and Caribbean dance forms. There is also a strong African influence. For example, the interactions between African and European ethnic groups are embedded in Cuban music and dances, including *danzon* and the *son* (Robbins, 1989). The corporeal traits of contemporary salsa reflect the meeting of European and African

⁴ Salsa has roots from Mambo. From 1947 to 1966, the Palladium Ballroom (known as "the home of the mambo"), was New York's most popular venue for Latin dance music (McMains, 2015: 30). Today, many Palladium-era dancers claim that salsa is a new dance genre that attracts younger generation to attend Cuban music events (McMains, 2015: 30). But salsa is not just a marketing term, as salsa music in New York during the 1970s used new strategies in musical composition, instrumentation, and style in its own right (McMains, 2015: 76-86).

tradition. During the Spanish colonization of Cuba (1511-1898), a great number of Europeans mostly from Spain settled there. Those European-derived elements of the dance, such as the upright bodily stance that maintains a straight back can be found in contemporary salsa (Daniel, 2002: 31). Although linked to shared European ideals of social partner dance, this posture was first brought to Cuba by Spaniards from southern Spain through a dance culture that uses an extended and uplifted upper body (Daniel, 2002: 31). This dance style is called zapateo, a signature of Spanish dance style particularly from Southern Andalusian dancing, where Flamenco was formed (Daniel, 2002: 31).⁵ In addition, the male and female dancers touch one another in a style of couple formation that derives from a different European legacy (Daniel, 2002: 32) traced back to the contredanse, which originated in England and Normandy and is notable for its couples dancing (Balbuena, 2003). On the other hand, the isolation of various body parts in salsa, and the articulation of the hips are African derived (Crowell, 2002: 18).

Unlike other popular world dance and partner dance forms, such as flamenco or tango, in which practitioners often trace back its dance roots to Seville (Spain) or Argentina,⁶ salsa's ownership is contested: is it Cuban, Puerto Rican, or from New York. Indeed, salsa's transnational origins are held up as evidence of its universality. Salsa globally circulates among various locations with salsa congress/festivals held around the world.⁷ In those international events, salsa has been promoted as a cosmopolitan practice and as a universal

⁵ Zapateo literally means "shoe tapping." It has a percussive footwork that can be found in flamenco dance. This dance form often used as a form of competition between two or more men. Compared to flamenco, this dance form does not have complicated arm movements and finger gestures as can be found in flamenco.

⁶ In the pioneering book *Tango and its Political Economy of Passion* (1995), Marta Savigliano describes how tango circulates in the First world and in turn becomes a national symbol for Argentina.

⁷ Salsa congresses are events where practitioners attend shows, workshops, and competitions. They have been circulated internationally around the world. According to dance scholar Juliet McMains, by 2012, more than fifty countries were hosting salsa congresses (McMains, 2015: 294). This indicates the world popularity of salsa.

language by the organizers. In Los Angeles, Hamburg, Miami, New York, Madrid, or Santiago de Cali, dancers in salsa congresses claim that salsa can unite the world. According to this narration, salsa's popularity constitutes a pan-global village-ness in salsa congresses around the world. It is also problematically considered as a malleable dance form onto which everyone who practices it can add their own "spice."

As a globalized dance form, salsa is promoted as a cosmopolitanism/urban dance practice reaffirming an understanding of its already "mixed" origins. It is international, and is already associated with the idea of mixture of culture and a global dance practice. Salsa's international urban appeal transformed this dance/music characterized by Cuban aesthetics into a widespread metropolitan world practice. This feature of salsa, therefore, provides an urban cosmopolitan space for Taiwanese practitioners to create an identity for themselves as neither Chinese nor Taiwanese but as salsa dancers. This allows them to develop an identity that they share with other salsa practitioners from around the world. It reinforces a perspective developed by the cosmopolitan setting of dance spaces in Taiwan. This shared identity, cultivated in transnational spaces, allows shifting alliances among practitioners of a range of national backgrounds.

Salsa is claimed to be universal, however, it still requires that dancers practice within certain boundaries of form. The statement of universality, playfulness, and relaxed attitude is only a conditional promise that places the representational hierarchy under erasure while de-emphasizing the power structure involved in the globalization process of salsa. This playful and fun representation of salsa neglects the exoticization of Latin America and possible hierarchy of race and the appropriation of other cultures embedded in the globalization of salsa. However, this attitude seems to be widely accepted by most salsa practitioners in Taiwan. Taiwanese urban professionals embrace salsa as a foreign dance form. The lack of

cultural specificity is engendered by the particular type of ‘othering’ of Latin-ness that occurs in Taiwan. Salsa in Taiwan is not just Latin, but a Western product. This acceptance of the foreign culture is central to salsa’s popularity in Taiwan because it allows the practitioners to perform a first world position in a global trend by mastering the codes in salsa.

Salsa entered Taiwan in the early 21th century, introduced by those who had studied abroad and by foreigners who lived in Taiwan, including Cynthia and Brook Hall.⁸ Salsa events were introduced by event promoters, such as Jon Raabe who worked in nightclubs such as “Brown Sugar” in 2003.⁹ Although this name of the salsa bar in itself conjures up an idea of exoticism from a Western perspective, the exoticism does not translate because “brown sugar” does not relate to exoticism if translated in Chinese. The first international Taipei salsa festival was held in 2007, indicating the first moment of popular foment of salsa in Taiwan. There are different salsa nightclubs that people can attend every night in Taipei. Salsa has enjoyed an increasing popularity in Taiwan among young professionals, a swatch of the social strata whose participation is predicated upon available leisure time and disposable income. Today the deeply engaged salsa lover’s population in Taipei is about 400 people¹⁰ (not including those in Taichung, and other major cities).¹¹ Although it is practiced by small number of people, these salsa practitioners are committed to the dance practice, making it as an important part of their daily life. They spend most of their leisure time, energy, and money

⁸ Based on my interview with James Wang on 6/28/2012 and interview with Larry Shao on 7/1/2012, the first generation who introduced salsa to Taiwan, such as Cynthia was studying in London, Larry Shao is graduated from the San Francisco Art Institute, both of them get their salsa information from their experiences abroad.

⁹ Brown Sugar is a popular night club located in Xinyi Dist (信義區), one of the most commercialized and rich areas in Taipei.

¹⁰ By “deeply engaged salsa lovers,” I referred to those salsa practitioners in Taiwan who not only attend salsa class, but also participate in salsa social life, such as joining a salsa company or attending salsa bars a few times in a week.

¹¹ Taichung is another big salsa city in Taiwan. The Taiwan Salsa Association is founded in Taichung.

in salsa, and often plan to travel around the world or make global connections through salsa. More importantly, there are Taiwanese artists and musicians creating a localized salsa music or art work. This commitment to salsa and the desire to create a “globalized but also Taiwanese” salsa is central to salsa’s importance in Taiwan.

Salsa has a specific history, but I intend to focus on its migration to Taiwan and its use in transnational settings. Therefore, I conduct an analysis of salsa different from the ones provided by other salsa scholars. Salsa is “always already”¹² a transnational practice. While salsa circulates internationally, drawing upon different national sources, and is re-imagined in various sites, it allows Taiwanese practitioners to carve out a space for themselves within a globalized public sphere. Salsa offers a particular imagination that is different from other partner dance.

Salsa Literature

I am not the first to unravel the complex relationships between nation, race, class, and gender as articulated through the transnational circulation of “Latin” dance forms. Within the salsa literature, much of the research focuses on music rather than dance (Aparicio, 1998; Fernandez, 2006; Leymarie, 2002; Padura & Clark, 2003; Rondón, 2008; Sublette, 2004; Waxer, 2002). My research is one of a handful of projects (Pietrobruno, 2006; Garcia, 2005; Malbon, 1999; Román-Velázquez, 2002; McMains, 2015) that attempts to address salsa as a dance practice. Salsa, dance and music alike, can be approached via a search for origins or through attention to new kinds of localization.

In dance and Latin American studies, many salsa histories are problematically grounded in nation-state forms and conflicting narratives of cultural history and heritage. Scholars have

¹² This phrase borrows from J. Derrida. It indicates a process that is in motion, waiting to be revealed or noticed.

investigated salsa's diverse origins and the contentious claims over its rightful ownership from within Cuba, New York, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, and Colombia (Aparicio, 1998; Boggs, 1992; Rondón, 2008; Waxer, 2002). While this contradicts how salsa is promoted as universal by international salsa promoters, these debates capture salsa's political associations. Through such debates over origins and belongings, salsa reflects discourses of nationalism and post-colonialism in the Americas. These scholarly debates address problems of ownership, racial "authenticity," and national identity in salsa. While these scholars attempt to locate an origin for salsa, I, like dance theorists Marta Savigliano (1995) and Janet O'Shea (2007), problematize this search for origins as emblematic of a postcolonial legacy.

In addition, scholars have looked at how the meaning of the moving body in dance and the migration of dance forms, traditions, and styles as cultural practices are shaped by specific located and interconnected histories and caught up in global cultural flows (Nash, 2000; Malbon, 1999; Savigliano, 1995; Cresswell, 2006). Globalized salsa serves as a good example to illustrate how flows move among various salsa practitioners around the world, and how salsa is being re-imagined in various social and cultural contexts.

Thus, I align myself with scholars who attend to new kinds of localization of salsa in various contexts. For instance, dance theorist Cindy Garcia argues that Latino salsa practitioners in Los Angeles deploy a pan-Latino identity through the practice of salsa (Garcia, 2005). Japanese Studies Scholar Shuhei Hosokawa argues that *Orquesta de la Luz*¹³ depoliticizes and de-eroticizes salsa for the purpose of international reception. However, Hosokawa does not focus on the power structure within the global circulation of salsa. I find it problematic to dismiss this political perspective about what kind of salsa being presented

¹³ *Orquesta de la Luz*, a Japanese salsa band that is well-known in Puerto Rico, Perú and other Latin American countries, provides evidence of salsa-as-global discourse.

and promoted as well as what gets eliminated through the global salsa circulation. The salsa literature rarely extends to considering the representation of salsa within the globalized salsa industry and the power hierarchy within salsa's global circulation.

In examining salsa in a global context, I am interested in the way that salsa allows for a specific kind of imagination, and how practitioners connect with each other through transnational movements and create a shifting alliance to bring enjoyable resistance to local politics. As little academic research exists on salsa in non-Latino or non-Global North social contexts, despite the fact that salsa has been recognized and popularized globally, my research extends and enriches the previous discourse about a globalized salsa dance in a non-Western context by examining salsa practices by the Taiwanese.

Phenomenology

I focus on salsa's migration to Taiwan and its use in transnational settings, and how salsa creates a specific imagination among its practitioners, therefore, I apply phenomenological analysis to undertake my beginning chapter of how salsa allows for an intersubjective relationship between partners. In anthropology, phenomenologists seek to comprehend knowledge about the structures of consciousness (Spiegelberg, 1982: 5-6). This refers to a way of studying ethnography, which emphasizes the direct experience of one's own consciousness. By doing so, the Cartesian body/mind dualism has been challenged by theorists, including Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Deleuze and Guattari, as the concept of the body is being rethought through philosophical lenses. These phenomenologists look at how subjectivity is constructed through orientation toward other objects.

In addition, there are other theorists apply phenomenology to explore experience in

various setting on how a specific set of cultural practices might affect dimensions of the way we perceive in everyday life (Young, 1990; Downey, 2010; Banes, 1987; Novack, 1990, Ness, 2011). However, their approach does not address the intersubjectivity that occurred in interpersonal relationships. Moreover, the majority of those theorists tend to ignore the importance of dance in the field of phenomenology. For example, in her pioneering essay “Throwing like a Girl,” Young mentions that “I leave unconsidered is structured body movement which does not have a particular aim—for example, dancing. (Young: 1990, p40)” Although there are scholars such as anthropologist Greg Downey who utilizes phenomenology to discuss capoeira (Downey: 2010) and Sally Ness who discusses rock climbing (Ness: 1987), these applied phenomenological discussions focused on daily movement and sports exclude partner social dance.

I look at salsa through a phenomenological lens, focusing on dance rather than music, and thus bring a new dimension of applied phenomenology into the study of intersubjectivity in partner dance. By exploring the phenomenology of transnational partner dancing, my research offers a new interpretation of interpersonal and transitional identity formation. Art theorist Erin Manning, in her book *The Politics of Touch: Sense, Movement, Sovereignty*, suggests that there is no body that exists before it moves. She reads the body as *relational* (Manning, 2007). Along the similar lines, I propose this new framework to examine the body politics in salsa by challenging applied phenomenology to think deeply on how salsa allows a multiplicity of intersubjective experience and a temporary identity formation among its practitioners. While phenomenology focuses on a fixed orientation, intersubjective approach pays attention to travel in a curvilinear shape or take a detour. This intersubjective approach could be implicated in studying how partner dance engages with conceptual and political discourses through interpersonal connections.

My dissertation challenges a fixed idea of subjectivity from applied phenomenology by attending to partner dance, providing what I hope will be an accessible, compelling, intentionally phenomenological way to look at dance, to think deeply about how two people construct their identities through partner dancing, and to deepen our understanding about intersubjective relationship in partner dance. My project extends the current phenomenology discourse about the body, especially the partner dance body.

Taiwanese Identity in Dance Studies

I am not the first to attend to the complexities of Taiwanese identity formation in arts forms. However, while most of dance studies emphasize the theoretical implications of theatrical performance, I bring a discussion of the body to Chinese/Taiwanese studies by focusing on non-theatrical dance and quotidian movement practice of salsa by Taiwanese practitioners. As the first project that attend to Taiwanese social dance in the English language, this dissertation addresses the ways in which social partner dance movement engages with issues of national, gender, and class identities. By examining salsa dance, as relational and moving within networks of power (Savigliano, 1995), I assert that social dance can reveal cultural values embodied in everyday practice.

In current Taiwanese dance studies, scholars have researched how dance is enlisted in the creation of subjectivity, embodiment, and social identities. For example, by investigating several works from Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan, dance theorist Yatin Lin argues that the company's choreography signals changes in types of Taiwanese national identification.¹⁴

¹⁴ Lin contextualizes the Cloud Gate Dance Theatre's work into four parts in relation to different cultural and political states in Taiwan: Chineseness in *Tale of the White Serpent* (1975), Taiwaneseeness in *Legacy* (1978), cosmopolitanism in *Rite of Spring, Taipei, 1984* (1984), and new "Eastern" aesthetics in the age of globalization.

Similarly, dance scholar Ya-ping Chen depicts Taiwanese contemporary dance as capable of disclosing the complex interplay of cultural and political practices that shape Taiwanese “subjectivity.”¹⁵ Through these analyses of the politics of the body, scholars have shown that nation-state politics are challenged through corporeal practice. However, Taiwanese dance studies has attended to exclusively theatrical concert dance forms, especially Western ones. While Taiwanese dance studies focuses almost exclusively on theatrical performance, my study of the quotidian body alongside the theatrical body on stage extends the dominant field of research topics.

Taiwanese salsa dancers are part of a generation that grew up without nation-state status. They are, perhaps, the first generation in Taiwan to do so. As China becomes an emerging super-power, there is much scholarly research that focuses on China in terms of its economy, society, and culture. Taiwan has become marginalized in the Chinese studies academic discipline just as it is marginalized politically (Shih, 2003). There is an urgency to look at Taiwan-China relations in this specific geo-economic region at this particular moment.

Salsa in Taiwan offers a parallel example to the status quo in Taiwan. In political reality, the Taiwanese government does not want to radically upset Chinese government (maybe due to possible military threat from China).¹⁶ Instead, they put boundaries in a diplomatic way

¹⁵ Chen utilizes literary scholar Liao Ch’ao-yang’s theory of the “empty subject” as the essential feature of Taiwanese subjectivity to describe the formation and development of Taiwanese contemporary dance. She emphasizes that the “subject” is always changing in Taiwanese context.

¹⁶ For example, there was a series of missile tests conducted by the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1996 across the Taiwan Strait. The first set of missiles fired were allegedly intended to send a strong signal to the Republic of China (ROC) government under Lee Teng-hui, who had been seen as more pro-Taiwanese independence. The second set of missiles was fired in early 1996, intending to intimidate the Taiwanese electorate in the run-up to the 1996 presidential election. However, because of this missile test, Lee Teng-hui was elected with the highest margin of votes ever in a Taiwanese presidential election.

that is manageable and safe.¹⁷ Along similar lines, salsa offers a soft resistance for Taiwanese to challenge their gender and national identity at home and abroad. Taiwanese people use economic power to gain flexible citizenship (Ong, 1999); these Taiwanese salsa practitioners who have better social ascendancy claim a first world position by mastering the codes in salsa. This idea of a conciliatory or non-threatening resistance is particularly useful for Taiwanese people whose status is precarious but whose existence is stable.

I establish social dance as a site of everyday political meaning making that works against a reified notion of abstract political reality bound to authoritative power. While theatrical dance forms may be arguably articulate as an elite vision of social identity, I bring to light a new dimension of social parter dance forms to be read as a collective experience of shared identity in Taiwan.

Flirting with Salsa

I am also not the first person to study salsa through the lens of gender, race/nation, and sexuality. For example, Garcia argues that there is a different hierarchy among Latina and White female salsa practitioners in Los Angeles salsa clubs (Garcia, 2005). Sheenagh Petrobruno (2006) argues that salsa provides a safe space for the Montreal salsa practitioners to practice traditional gender rules that have been abandoned by the Canadian society. While those theories mainly focus on race and gender identities, I would like to supplement those

¹⁷ For example, while most of the countries in the world accept the idea of “One-China Policy” because Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China, the Taiwanese government claims that “One-China Policy” does not necessarily mean that the real China is the PRC in mainland, but could be the ROC in Taiwan. Taiwanese government asserts its position as “One-China as interpreted differently by the two states (一個中國，各自表述),” suggesting that PRC and ROC have respective interpretations of what “One-China Policy” means. In addition, Taiwanese government would join the international events, such as Olympic Games, under the name of “Chinese Taipei” to gain diplomatic visibility without inciting conflict with China. Moreover, Taiwanese passport cover includes both ROC and Taiwan as its name of the nation.

studies with the limited literature on flirtation.

The concept of flirtation has been studied in the field of communication, psychology, and marketing studies (Givens: 1978, Phillips: 1994, Eglund: 1996). Theorizations of flirtation mainly focus on flirtation at the courtship level, focusing on its communicative role in human behavior. These flirtation concepts are basic and literal, and fail to mobilize the element of social experimentation that is inherent to flirtation and is, perhaps, different from other elements of courtship. Little research has been done on flirtation, especially with a symbolic idea of an imagined identity. However, anthropologist Kevin A. Yelvington, in his article “Flirting in the Factory,” suggests that flirting can be analyzed as a serious medium for identity formations and exercise of power (Yelvington, 1996). Along similar lines, flirtation serves as a metaphor for me to illustrate how salsa creates a different kind of imagination. This imagination allows salsa practitioners to make a temporary, future-orientated alliance among each other. Flirtation asserts interpersonal comfort and self confidence. It offers a diplomatic way for people to interact with others with low risk. I provide a more nuanced conceptualization of flirtation in my study of salsa by attended to flirtation as a broader metaphor for interpersonal relationships and the construction of national, gender, and class identity.

Overview of Methodology

My methodology draws on the analytical methods from the field of dance studies and anthropology. As such, I use choreographic analysis (includes movement and semiotic analysis), ethnography, phenomenology, and archival research to conduct my research. Dance Studies scholar Cynthia J. Novack (1990) provides an intertextual methodology model for my research. Novack argues that dance produces culture and can be understood through a

methodology based on ethnographic methods, such as interviews, participant-observation, archival research, and frameworks from dance studies such as movement analysis and choreographic analysis. Novack also traces the life histories of contact improvisation dancers, and compares contact improvisation with other dance/movement forms such as modern dance and protest. By articulating what she called “core movement values” (Novack, 1990: 115) for contact improvisation, she is able to link the movement analysis to sub-cultural values. The sub-culture values are also important for my research that salsa models a way of life in daily practice.

This dissertation arises out of fifteen years of experience with dance (Chinese folk dance, international folk dance, ballroom dance, and social partner dance practice in Taiwan), seven years of Latin dance practice in Taiwan, and five years of salsa in Los Angeles. These partner dance practices have led me on international salsa journeys from Taiwan, to Los Angeles, New York, Barcelona, Stuttgart, Berlin, Shanghai, and Havana. As a salsa practitioner, my salsa network is extensive and longstanding. Participant observation aims to gain a close and intimate familiarity with a given group of individuals. Interviewing, photographing, and video recording are the supplement for me to conduct this research. My long and extensive relationship with the salsa community is essential to my field research.

Central to this study is an examination of bodily experience and identity. I therefore rely on phenomenological reflections on salsa events, clubs, international congresses, and studio classes, during my field research in Cuba (May, 2013), Taiwan (July, August, September 2012, and August to December 2013), Los Angeles (2010-2015), and Shanghai (September, 2013). I interviewed practitioners, including dance students, instructors, salsa event organizers, and salsa artists, as well as practitioners in the dance studios, salsa clubs, and international salsa congresses. Throughout my fieldwork, I assured my interviewees that I

would use their English name instead of Chinese name to protect their privacy. The exception is Albert Torres, the world famous salsa promoter¹⁸. Given his celebrity and centrality to the world salsa scene, attempts to disguise his identity would be not reasonable. All interviews in China and Taiwan were conducted in Chinese, the rest were conducted in English.

Along with attending the dance events, choreographic analysis is my critical framework to analyze how people embody and create meaning. Choreography, as the act of theorizing bodily identity, includes choices about who and what the body is (Foster, 1998). In my research, the analysis of choreography allows us to understand how people perform their identity through the practice of salsa. I use choreographic analysis to look at the comportment of the socialized body and its meaning. Such explorations enable me to establish meaningful liaisons between the sensual and the sociopolitical aspects of salsa practice.

I cite the lyrics of the salsa songs and collect numerous pictures from flyers, magazines, posters, music album covers, and news papers. Semiotic analysis is one of my methodologies to analyze signs (e.g., flyers, postcards, documentaries, exhibition, and music videos) as component parts to produce meanings. I examine magazine and newspaper reviews, flyers, ads, and previews and features about salsa events; photographic images used to promote salsa; and performance programs containing instructors' and presenters' statements in salsa events or salsa congresses.

Lastly, archival research is central to trace the genealogy of corporeal conformity in Taiwan, especially with regards to the study of early social partner dance in Taiwan. I conducted archival research with a focus on newspapers, magazine, journals about the early social dance in various public libraries. My archival research in the National Library of

¹⁸ One thing to be noted is that Larry Shao is Shao's English name (not Chinese name). Shao uses Larry as his name publicly in Taiwan, especially in salsa venues. Given that he is a famous salsa instructor, artist, and promoter, it would also be unnecessary to hide his identity in my research.

Public Information (國立公共資訊圖書館, summer 2011, summer 2012, and fall 2013) in Taichung and the National Central Library (國家圖書館, summer 2012 and fall, 2013) in Taipei sheds light on a complex history of social dance in Taiwan. I examine the most popular newspapers, *Taiwan Daily News* (臺灣日日新報, 1898.5.6-1944.4.1) and *Wind and Moon News* (風月報, 1935.5.9-1936.2.8), during the Japanese colonization era in Taiwan. I also did archival research in a private institution—the Formosa Vintage Museum Cafe (秋惠文庫) in Taipei, and with an antique collector Li Kuncheng (李坤城) in Taiwan. Li’s collection allows me to reach the first hand material of dance music gramophone records in 1930s in Taiwan with vivid illustration of dance steps and dancing images in the music cover. Part of my dissertation is dealing with the unspoken history of early partner dance in Taiwan, these historical materials is crucial to analyze about comporment in social partner dance works in Taiwanese history.

Chapter Breakdown

There are three chapters in this dissertation. In each of my chapters, I begin with a fictional story to invite the readers to imagine the scene that I am talking about and to establish the key issues that the chapter explores. Chapter One “How to theorize Social Dance: Imagining, Desire, and Flirtation in Salsa” serves as the ontological and theoretical foundation for my research. I draw on phenomenology to indicate how distance, relationality, affinity, solidarity, and communication work in partner dance. I focus on the idea of a fluid, constructed self in salsa dancing through the perspective of phenomenology. I provide a philosophical study of experience and consciousness between human interactions in salsa. I compare the sense of “flow” produced in contact improvisation, tango, to salsa. I theorize

how flirting operates as a structuring device in salsa. The structure of salsa creates a relationship between two people and thus it requires not only phenomenological study of experience but also investigations of intersubjectivity. In this chapter, I examine two scenarios as case studies—one from the Taiwanese salsa dance scene; another contemporary dance piece, *The Rite of Spring*, presented in a salsa version by Emanuel Gat Dance Company—to investigate how the moving body in salsa plays with ideas of desire and imagined identities.

Chapter Two “How to Conform in Taiwan and How to Break the Rules” focuses on the bodily discipline of comportment in Taiwanese society. It sets up a genealogy of corporeal conformity and rule breaking in Taiwanese dance culture. I explore the idea of a normative, historically rooted, and continually changing Chinese/Taiwanese body. I trace the transformations in three ideal mainstream bodies: the Confucian body, the modern body, and the combative national body. By exploring the expression of desire and the performance of normative masculinity and femininity in Taiwan, I illustrate dominant notions of a disciplined body in Taiwanese culture. I signal how ideals of comportment change over time, and how the corporeal conformity is broken by various danced tactics. I look at how social dance becomes a soft resistance and(or) reinforcement to these various mainstream bodies with a focus on how salsa provides a different way of behaving for both genders in Taiwan.

Chapter Three “How to Flirt with Global Citizenship in International Salsa Sites” examines how Taiwanese salsa practitioners flirt with salsa dance as a foreign product, a foreign cultural imagination, and a concept of the Western modernity. I examine the Taiwanese identity through ideas of the empty subject (Liao, 1995) and cultural inauthenticity (Shih, 2003). Drawing from various Taiwanese dance examples, such as various salsa dancers who travel around the world to dance and perform in international salsa congresses, I look at

how dance travel becomes a cosmopolitan practice, and how cosmopolitanism becomes a survival mechanism for the Taiwanese. I investigate how Taiwanese practitioners at international salsa congresses mediate national and international identities through performance. By providing Taiwanese dancers with a means of exercising this global focus in a seemingly apolitical space, salsa offers the Taiwanese an opportunity to develop the notion of a cosmopolitan self to create global citizenship in the world.

In the concluding chapter “Conclusion: How to Imagine a Different Possibility from Reality, ” I conclude my project on how Taiwanese dancers reimagine a sense of nation and gender by fashioning divergent foreign dance aesthetics in response to the local politics in the context of globalization. I assert that imagination in globalized dance forms allows a shifting alliance for their practitioners. I extend my inquiry by asking how imagination works in globalized dance forms as a means of resistance to domestic cultural norms. I briefly outline the possible implications of my research by pointing to future extensions of this project.

Conclusion

In Tokyo, Beijing, Shanghai, Taipei, as well as in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Hamburg, Barcelona, Berlin, Paris, and Havana, people from different ethnicities and national backgrounds come together to enjoy this Latin dance gathering. Taiwanese salsa practitioners dance in the fancy salsa bars in Taipei and in international salsa congresses around the world. However, in Asia, there is no salsa dancing competition over authenticity and ownership as often appears in the US among South Americans, Central Americans, Mexicans, or Chicanos (Garcia, 2013). The salsa concept in Asia is about an excitement, an adventure, and an exotic and erotic flavor. Taiwanese salsa dancers play with the idea of foreignness through salsa as a globalized dancing trend.

The study of Taiwanese salsa offers a way to understand how the transnational salsa practice constructs different identities in various contexts. This introduction helps to understand salsa's migration to Taiwan and its usage in transnational settings. I examine how salsa allows for a shifting alliance for its practitioners. I look at how salsa creates a specific kind of imagination through its movement and choreography. Because salsa has a history of being globalized in the first place, its cosmopolitan setting offers the possibility for its practitioners to imagine a pleasant and soft resistance. These Taiwanese salsa dancers attend salsa clubs as a way to escape their daily social pressure. The idea of a conciliatory resistance is particularly useful for Taiwanese practitioners who do not want to take too high social risk. I intend this dissertation to broaden academic understanding of the globalization of dance practices, by signaling how salsa relates to issues of nation, race, class, gender, and identity in a Taiwanese context.

Although there is still a leader-follower convention in salsa's heterosexual couples, salsa requires each partner to be mutually independent and dependent at the same time. We shall then move on to an analysis of how Taiwanese dancers negotiate their interpersonal relationships through salsa. This new intersubjective negotiation in salsa, as I argued, allows Taiwanese practitioners to construct new fluid identities, which enable them to strategically resist dominant cultural norms.

Chapter One

How to Theorize Social Dance: Imagining, Desire, and Flirtation in Salsa

Los Angeles is not only the home for movies, but it is also one of the top salsa spot in the world. In Santa Monica, one of the touristy districts in Los Angeles, dancers from diverse ethnicities flock to the Wokcano bar near the Third Street Promenade. This bar is an Asian fusion restaurant, serving sushi and Americanized Asian food. On the second floor, the atmosphere instantly takes on another tone through Latin music. With a huge outdoor dancing space, guests dance under the stars in the ocean breeze and drink tropical cocktails in this open air rooftop. On a warm night in Los Angeles, this is a refreshing experience. Beginner and intermediate lessons are offered at 9pm, right before the dance party starts. A DJ spins Latin classics from salsa to bachata. Men and women rotate as they switch partners while learning the new steps. Arriving dancers get ready to break the ice with this practiced crowd. As the night gets dark, more accomplished dancers show off their skills.

Salsa patterns typically use three steps during four beats with one beat being skipped. This skipped beat is often marked by a shifting of weight from one foot to the other. A couple dances in a line, but they keep switching their orientations as they move. They step back and forth. One dancer makes a turn and dances across her partner. Their bodies do not stick to each other, but are only connected by hands. This allows for a flexible communication between the two. On the other side of the corner, another well-trained couple dances playfully, as they smile to each other. She dances a performed teasing by using an unexpected move— a lady styling, complex foot patterns in a very fast pace as well as arm and hand styling movements, which shows off her solo skills. She breaks away from her partner, performing elaborate footwork that her partner is not able to follow. They continue to

surprise each other with different leading and following styles. They respond quickly to one another. There seems to be a mutual communication and a playful competition going on between the partners.

This chapter examines the sensuality of the moving body in salsa through phenomenology. In what follows, I focus on the idea of a fluid, constructed self in salsa dancing through the perspectives of phenomenology. I provide a philosophical study of experience and consciousness in human interactions in salsa. I look at the interrelation between dance partners. I theorize key components of social partner dance, and especially pay attention to imagination, desire, and flirtation in salsa dance. The structure of salsa creates a relationship between two people and thus it requires not only phenomenological study of experience but also investigations of intersubjectivity. I argue that the improvised choreography in salsa allows a mutual and partially independent and partially dependent intersubjective relationship between dance partners.

In order to account for intersubjectivity, rather than merely subject-creating action through dance, I turn to the concept of flow from Taoism, I explore how salsa enables an exchange of a balanced and equal flow between partners in a social dance setting. I investigate flirting as a metaphor in salsa that salsa dancers use to play with imagined identities. While most phenomenology focuses on individual subjectivity, my focus is on the intersubjectivity that arises through the fluid and liberating idea of finding an interactive intersubjectivity in partner dancing. I examine two scenarios as case studies—one from the Taiwanese salsa dance scene; another contemporary dance piece, *The Rite of Spring*, presented in a salsa version by Emanuel Gat Dance Company— to investigate how the moving body in salsa plays with desire, imagining, and identity construction in various

contexts.

A Fluid Self in Phenomenology

Dance is about subjectivity as “subjectivity is always embodied” (Jones, 1998; Garner, 1884. Quoted from Lepecki and Banes, 2007). While dance deals maximally with moving and using one’s body in space, studying dance serves as a way of adding specificity to bodily experience. By looking at the dancing body as a site of meaning-making, dance studies challenges a body/mind dualism, and at the same time brings nuance to body politics and the construction of the self in motion.

The body has remained a conceptual blind spot in mainstream Western philosophy. In Western epistemology, the Cartesian binary system treats the body as primitive, natural, biologically determined, fixed, ahistorical, and pre-cultural, in contrast to the mind, which is framed as social, ideological, sophisticated, and logical. This conceptual rift between body and mind marginalizes the body. This body/mind dualism thus results in a lack of theorizing about bodily experience having a positive potential for agency.

However, since the 1940s, the Cartesian body/mind dualism has been challenged by theorists, including Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Deleuze and Guattari, who argue for the centrality of bodily experience as constitutive of subjectivity. According to phenomenology, perception informs and is informed by subjectivity. These philosophers emphasize how the self is constructed through experience, and how the orientation and intention of the body helps us to perceive the world. For example, Merleau-Ponty critiques the identification of the body as a physical object like other material objects:

Thinking which looks on from above, thinks of the object-in-general must return to the “there is” which underlies it; to the site, the soil of the sensible and opened world such

as it is in our life and for our body— not that possible body which we may legitimately think as an information machine but that actual body I call mine, this sentinel standing quietly at the command of my words and acts.

(Merleau-Ponty, 1964: 140-161)

Merleau-Ponty reorients the tradition of Western philosophy by locating subjectivity not in mind or consciousness, but in the body. Merleau-Ponty emphasizes that the body is a living experience, is an experienced phenomenon. His philosophy indicates a shift from the “I think” of my mind to an examination of the “I can” of my body. That is, he rejects “body-mind dualism, and (re)claims the centrality of the body and embodied experience as the locus (Zarrilli, 2007:48).” For Merleau-Ponty’s, the relation of the subject to its world is initially defined by the ordinary purposive orientation of the body as a whole toward things and the body’s environment (Merleau-Ponty, 1945). The body is the first locus of intentionality, a pure presence to the world. The most primordial intentional act is the motion of the body orienting itself with respect to and moving within its surroundings (Young, 1980: 35). Phenomenology brings to light this emphasis of the body in relation to the world, and therefore challenges the traditional body/mind binary system. Bodies can be viewed as liberating terms of cultural, sexual, and racial production. Bodies are not only inscribed, marked, and engraved by social pressures external to them, but are also the products of social constitution itself (Grosz, 1994:x) Phenomenologists emphasize the productivity of the body, the ways in which the social inscriptions of bodies produce effects of depth. The body is a site where regimes of discourse and power inscribe themselves.

Following Merleau-Ponty’s philosophical turn toward body, phenomenologists focus on the issue of subjectivity created as one orients his or her body toward the world and the objects in it. For instance, Sara Ahmed utilizes Husserl’s phenomenological metaphor of the

table to illustrate how the subject orients itself toward other objects. Ahmed argues that “we assume our points of view are natural or inevitable because those are the only points of view within our line of sight (Ahmed, 2006:14)”. We know things only to the extent that we can perceive them along the “line” of our orientation. The line fades into the background; we notice only the objects along the line. In this articulation, there is a pre-established line of orientation that exists even before we perceive it.

Although Ahmed concludes by proposing disorientation as a means of challenging the existing lines of orientation directed at bodies and spaces, her argument still focuses on point-to-point direction (e.g., from her body to the table). Therefore, even if there is queering of disorientation, disorientation still ends up forming another line. It also does not leave room for subjects to negotiate with other subjects. In her phenomenological analysis, other people basically function as objects. This critique is important to my analysis as Ahmed’s approach does not accommodate the agency of other people or their continually changing behavior.

Instead of looking at people as objects as Ahmed’s approach suggests, theorists of intersubjectivity emphasize the interaction between individuals. Rather than use a fixed idea of perception from a pure phenomenologist’s perspective, applied phenomenology scholars such as Iris Marion Young, Elizabeth Grosz, and Greg Downey have argued that perception is also an intertwining process where all elements are constantly crossing and being crossed. Selfhood and subjectivity thus only come into being in a continuous process.

Feminist phenomenologist Iris Marion Young expresses how women experience their body as a *thing* at the same time that they experience it as an *ability* due to the constraints of a sexist society. She argues that the body is the subject of free will and the decision-maker, but also is subjected to social construction (Young, 1990). However, while Young emphasizes the gendered social construction of the woman’s inability to be a complete subject (men get

the opportunity to be a complete subject whereas women experience themselves as simultaneously subjects and objects), anthropologist Greg Downey responds to Young, arguing that different movements are resulted from training and that inability is a step in the process toward ability. Complex movement skills, such as throwing a ball, are acquired through a process of training that leads up to mastery. He carefully analyzes how training, and learning, can be viewed as step-by-step problem solving. In other words, people are able to change themselves through the movement-learning and training processes.

A self is constructed by experiences, and it can be changed throughout one's lifetime. Experience is the essential reality, and matter is viewed as a representation of the primary reality, which is also experience (Schwartz, 2002: 278). There is no "is" until an observer makes an observation; only lived experience is reality (Schwartz, 2002: 263). Our experience, including any new training, creates the possibility of challenging and changing the fixed norms of our self. The moving body, or the body in motion, brings new agency to the subject. Since the mind and body are changeable and can be shaped through bodily training, it is therefore important to look at how practicing dance affects our minds, bodies, and, hence, ourselves.

Selfhood and subjectivity are not pre-determined, but continue to reaffirm and be reaffirmed by one's choices. Therefore, thinking beyond the line allows a queering of point to point direction as Ahmed argues, and creates the possibility of circling or detouring. Instead of focusing on a fixed orientation, intersubjectivity is constantly about making the continuous changeable agreements between two people. This intersubjectivity includes dynamic interaction, shifting subjectivity (desire shift), and the anticipation of being touched.

As art theorist Erin Manning illustrates, tango plays out power politics of bodily interactions between two people. Her arguments is helpful to flesh out how intersubjectivity

is different from phenomenology. According to Manning, touch between two people is never an end but rather is a “reaching towards” that involves the body in interaction (Manning, 2007). She argues, “I reach not toward the ‘you’ I ascertain but toward the ‘you’ you will become in relation to our exchange. When I reach to touch you, I touch not the you who is fixed in space as pre-orchestrated matter/form. I touch the you that you will become in response to my reaching toward (Manning, 2007:8, 87).” She asserts that by turning towards an other, a person engages with the very potentiality of extending her/himself, of challenging her/himself to feel the presence (and absence) of that other (Manning, 2007). Touch always involves the generative production of time-space in relation to the other person. Therefore it is always about inter-relationships amongst people. This narration a far more fluid understanding of interactions between partners in a dance.

In partner dancing, the body is the starting point for exploration; the body is a relative fact. Partner dance, as grounded in the body and movements in space, is about positioning, orienting oneself toward other people, and bringing attention to performers across the world. In partner dancing, dancers engage their movements with other people around them in space. In this sense, dancing can be seen as a way of orienting others. There are always at least two bodies. Two dancers stand close, facing one another, reaching- toward an embrace that will signal an acceleration of the movement that has always already begun. There can be no beginning or end to movement. It is a phase of *being* in a constantly changing process of negotiation. This phase of *being* is constituted by three mixed dimensions of processes: one’s subjectivity, another’s subjectivity, and intersubjectivity between the two. The dancers’ subjectivities in partner dance are not fixed—they arise from a fluid exchange between the two parts that make a complete whole. To move is to engage the potential inherent in the pre-acceleration that embodies you. Movement is one with the world, a body-worlding (Manning,

2009: 13).

The Balanced Flow of Equality in Partner Dancing

In this section, I will draw on the Taoist philosophical concept of qi (氣) and the balanced flow that occurs in partner dance to discuss the difference between subjectivity and intersubjectivity. While qi is the circulation of energy within one body, flow is communication via an energetic connection. I assert that qi is more like the inner force within one's body that symbolizes one's self or subjectivity, whereas flow relates to intersubjectivity between partners. I emphasize how salsa training enables a balanced flow that enables mutual communication between partners.

While various Chinese philosophers and thinkers have different interpretations of the idea of qi, I mainly rely on the discussion presented by philosophers in the Taoist tradition, notably from the work of *Laozi* (《老子》), which is referred to as the *Tao Te Ching*, 《道德經》), and that of *Zhuangzi* (《莊子》), which draw from teachings during the Zhou Dynasty (770-453 BC). These teachings became the theoretical base for Taoism.

Qi can be literary translated as “air,” “breath,” or “gas.” In its original sense, it most commonly means “natural energy,” “life force,” or “energy flow” that is embedded in the human body. It is the central underlying principle in traditional Chinese medicine and martial arts. Famous Taoist chemist and philosopher Ge Hong (葛洪, 284-363 AD) once said that “the human exists within the qi, and qi exists within the human body (人在氣中，氣在人中).”¹⁹ This phrase indicates qi as a flow of energy that sustains living beings. Qi is also featured in the martial arts, especially in the internal training systems. For example, Qigōng

¹⁹ In *Baopuzi* (《抱朴子·治理》), or “The Master Who Embraces Simplicity” written by Ge Hong.

(氣功) is a martial art practice that involves coordinated breathing, movement, and awareness. It is often viewed as a practice to cultivate balanced qi inside oneself. This concept of qi emphasizes harmonization and synchronization within one's body.

According to the Chinese scientific concept, the body is viewed as a whole system, not as separate organs, and the inner connections within the human body are processed and embodied through qi (Yang, 1993:133), as qi is the central focus in discussing the body from Taoist perspective. The human being, and its relationship to the universe, is based on its interrelations through qi, and the best condition of a human being is to find a balanced qi within the body and with its surroundings. In this regard, a space is never an absolute abstract place, but a system that operates according to the qi within it. The Taoist master Laozi thus considered a balanced body to be “the created universe carries the yin at its back and the yang in front; through the union of the pervading principles it reaches harmony (負陰抱陽沖氣以為和).”

The stereotypical and orientalized idea of yin and yang is oppositional. Yin literally means the "shady side" and yang means the “sunny side”. Yin represents negative and passive principles in nature, such as the moon, the earth, darkness, and reserved femininity. In contrast, yang represents positive and active principles in nature, such as the sun, the sky, brightness, and relaxed masculinity. These two oppositional elements work together to keep the cosmos and universe thriving.



FIGURE 1.1. The illustration of yin (black part) and yang (white part). In practice, these two components are not fixed; they form an eddy. Yin and yang are swirling toward each other to make a moving whole.

While the stereotypical concept of yin and yang is oppositional, in Taoism, the concept of yin and yang is not binary or compartmental. Instead, there is a relationship of switching and exchanging between the two; this relationship is what I call flow. Yin and yang, as shown in Figure 1, are the seemingly opposite forces that are actually complementary, interconnected, and interdependent in the natural world. Yin and yang produce momentum as they move toward one another. Together, they allow a continuous moving pattern that keeps changing but stays as a whole. In this way, the concept of yin and yang illustrates how two dance partners engage with each other through this continues flow.

The idea of flow is phenomenological, as flow moves around and through the body and links to the environment, forming the body into a cohesive and functioning unit. Flow enables a connection between living beings and their surroundings. Flow is achieved everywhere and anywhere, and it is a unity of material, function, and message. While the universe is a qi system where any elements reflect and influence our perception of a unity as a whole (Yang: 1993: 38), flow is an extended concept of qi that allows Taoism to support the idea of intersubjectivity.

In my theorization, flow is the inner non-verbal exchange between two dance partners as they move toward each other. Flow is an extension of qi into the world and among people. It is the energy that each person possesses, and a communication between two individuals. A balanced flow in partner dancing is a coordinated breathing, movement, and awareness between the two. It increases the dancer's intense attention to the reciprocal relationship between each other. Each dancer senses his or her partner, finding a flow between them, and thus he or she is able to continue to dance smoothly and harmoniously.

More concretely, in partner dance, flow is the exchange of qi that occurs during the dance. Flow connects the two bodies, as one decides to expose him or herself, skin to skin, to another person's changing movement decisions. Dancers carefully sense the weight change in order to get an indication of what to do next. While in partner dances one member is visualized or represented as the leader and the other as the follower, in practice, both practitioners have to carefully sense their partner's intention and orientation in order to dance smoothly and harmoniously together. One cannot dance with a partner effectively without being responsive. For example, if a leader initiates his/her move only through his/her arms (not from his core muscles and using his entire body), then the leader and the follower are not completely engaged with each other. This incomplete flow breaks the transfer of energy between them. In contrast, both leader and follower respond each other based on their bodies as a whole. That is, leader pulls follower's arm, and the follower responds to this tension with his or her whole body, then, the movements are connected with fluid flow exchange. In this way, flow is not about applying strength or forcing the other person to move, but about yielding and merging to other people's energy.

Sometimes an experienced female dancer can take the lead even when she is not doing the leading movements. That is, she leads the dance by indicating the movements she wants

by shifting her weight or increasing the pressure on the partner, even though she is at the same time responding with the follower's moves. She is leading passively, leading from behind. These occasions require the leader to sense and pay attention to the follower's move. This only happens when both dancers are well-trained and are able to sense the partner's moves accordingly. These movements are central to salsa because they show that both followers and leaders are playing equally important roles in salsa dance although salsa retains a gendered division of labor.

Flow exists in the singular-plural, it is one person and more than one. Flow enacts a relational partnership. Flow in dance is always about communication. In partner dancing, the partners cannot be understood as separate parts but must be analyzed as a single whole and an experiential inter-subjective body. The whole body is an intentional body, which is lived through, and in relation to, possibilities in the world. By constantly exchanging and re-negotiating between the dancers in partner dancing, partner dance provides a forum for the discussion of the dynamics of interaction, shifting subjectivity, anticipation of being, and intersubjectivity.

Salsa Training in Balanced Flow

La Salsa Taipei (台北愛騷莎) is a dance studio located near the Taipei main station. The studio is run by Larry Shao, a salsa instructor and visual art artist who learned salsa when he studied at the San Francisco Art Institute. Shao is a former member of the *Mambo Romero Dance Company* based in San Francisco. In his dance class, Shao asks students to pay attention to the body's weight change and its movement in relation to gravity. Most importantly, he teaches students how to listen to the music's rhythm with the beat, and how to move smoothly with flow between partners.



FIGURE 1.2. *Taipei Love Salsa* studio, Taiwan.
Photo by I-Wen Chang.

In the *La Salsa Taipei* dance studio, salsa beginners do not memorize steps first, but instead start with cultivating a sense of each other’s weight and movement flow before the class begins. “The students should learn how two partners connect with each other,” Shao emphasizes in his teaching. This approach helps the dancers to be better prepared to start partner dancing. On the dance floor, beginner dancers have to “get ready” before they dance. This “getting ready” does not just mean engaging in the bodily skills of flexibility and strength, but also practicing getting to know another person by their body condition and ability. The hardest part in starting a partner dance is sensing one’s partner’s weight and being able to manipulate this weight among the two. Salsa practice emphasizes equality, flow, and balance. Dancers learn the new ability to sense other dancers.

In the dance process, the dance partners have to maintain this balance of equal weight; each person of the pair must be able to delicately tell what to do by sensing the indications in flow. In the dance studio, Shao’s student Amanda learns to push her weight forward towards her partner, so that she can receive back from her partner a responding weight. This training in dance opens up a person’s ability to perceive another person’s movement. To dance better and enjoy a dancing experience with another dancer requires a mutual understanding— by

sensing the flow between partners, one is able to determine the ability of the other dancer, and thus is able to adjust oneself in conversation with the other.

Amanda's partner makes a cross-body lead, where she steps in front of him while at the same time he lets go of her left palm for her to do 'lady styling.' She shows off her skills by making fast and sharp turns, and her arms point upward with a lotus finger style (the thumb and the middle finger slightly bent and the other three fingers spread in lotus petals shape). She swirls her left arm above her head, making a butterfly hand gesture with her fingers. Her partner frees her to do a solo. She shimmies her shoulders and fast steps as a salsa shine.²⁰ In this specific moment, they do not touch, but still keep an eye on each other, in order to make their movement balanced as a dance couple. When they partner up, it is about continuous mutual understanding, negotiating, and communicating; when separate, it is about competing, but this competing is balanced with the idea of competing as a partnership in front of the group.

The training in salsa enables practitioners to sense themselves differently, and gain new kinds of communication skills with others. In the dance studio, one of the first few lessons (besides listening to the music and rhythm) is to find balance with another person through weight change. In partner dance, weight change is important for dancers to communicate a lead for the next step to follow. For example, if a leader moves backward, the follower needs to move forward according to this weight change. Dancers are able to communicate their willingness to do certain movements, such as the number of turns, or their willingness to do solo dance by reading points of contact between partners (usually pressure on the palms). In this way, there is a balanced flow, especially in cases where there is close physical contact.

²⁰ Salsa shine is sometimes referred to as salsa suelta or pasos libres, and it is a solo work. Solo work helps define how we move and tie our bodies together in pair work, and the concept of solo steps has become so ingrained in international salsa that it's now a competition genre of its own.

There will be a mutual agreement regarding flow, and if one dancer detects the other dancer's wishes to go in a certain direction, generally each dancer will yield in order to preserve the harmony of the flow.

In this salsa dance training, experienced male and female dancers experience physical mastery. One dancer is able to actively communicate with and respond to his/her partner such that neither one is more an "object" than the other. The women in salsa I interviewed talk about themselves as having the power to control their body and feel confident and comfortable via their expertise in dance. They do not only address their appearance (both men and women dress up for salsa events), but also their gaining of mastery in physical actions. This "leading from behind" allows a soft resistance for women with a low social risk. Salsa creates space for negotiation within established parameters, and this has an efficacy for Taiwanese women who are disinclined to disturb an existing situation (sexist society). The balanced flow of exchange in dancing allows the woman to view herself as a subject interacting with another subject. She has the ability to experience her body as potential agent of her own subjectivity. The experience of physical mastery involved in salsa training allows practitioners to construct a different self toward others.

More often than not, female beginners dance better and learn faster than male dancers. In both Taiwan and the United States, while males are normally considered better in sports, women are typically understood as being better dancers. This may be due to the fact that the training system in partner dance is different than it is in most sports. The partner dance training often emphasizes cooperative interaction between partners, rather than competition and individual achievement. In Taiwan, as in the US, men are encouraged toward individualistic behavior while women are conditioned to put the collective before the individual.

Due to the fact that men are conditioned to excel at agentive movement – physical labor and sports aimed toward a goal, many straight men are trained in movement that has utility and is carried out in relation to an object. Men are encouraged less toward non-goal oriented, non-object oriented movement (dance, yoga, even gymnastics). Women in Taiwan, by contrast, are encouraged into sports/arts that are not object oriented.²¹ Taiwanese women are trained in how to respond to other people, and this seems to be a helpful learning process to better dance with other people. Based on the current gendered condition of society, it seems much easier for female dancers to be prepared (as they already trained to communicate and cooperate) to sense a partner’s movement. Men who are not used to building the skills for “communicating,” but rather build skills for “competing,” might find dance threatening as they have to change their mentality and attitude toward themselves.

While men are normally not considered as skilled as women in dance, capoeira practitioners who are mostly males seem to adapt salsa moves well in Taiwan. There are several male capoeira practitioners in Taiwan who also dance salsa, and they learn salsa much faster and better than other male dancers. The balancing and equalizing of flow are the key components in salsa partnering, and this might be somewhat similar to the balancing of flow in capoeira. According to anthropologist Greg Downey, capoeira teaches practitioners a new way of using their bodies to perceive multiple stimuli in their environment, and thereby predict the moves of their opponents. In learning capoeira, a student is trained to “shape perceptions that guide a student’s own discovery of a skill (Downey, 2005: 45).” This helps to explain why capoeiristas thrive in salsa. To be a better salsa dancer, one has to find his or her way in smoothly transferring weight between partners. Moreover, sensing another person’s

²¹ Interestingly, in the US. there seems to be more acceptance of women in goal-orientated sports that are culturally newer, such as rock climbing and soccer.

movement requires concentration. This concentration comes from listening to others first, rather than just expressing oneself without listening.

Why Salsa and What does Salsa do Differently from Other Partner Dance?

On a movement level, salsa offers a different kind of touch compare to other partner dance. In contrast to other partner dance forms, in salsa, dancers place their palms together. Salsa partners use an “open position” in which partners are connected primarily at the hands. This “open position” encourages a smooth interaction between the two, engendering sensitivity to the partner’s energy, which is vital to the duet. This position allows for more flexibility. Because of these open positions, compared with other forms of pair dancing, salsa allows for more improvisation and dynamic interactions in the space between partners. Salsa is not necessarily formally locked in a gendered leader-follower binary, but rather is flexible, allowing for more equality between partners. Through improvisation and spontaneity, the dancers respond to expected and unexpected movements, suggesting new ones, and even possibly subverting them. The connection of only using hands allows a salsa dance couple to create a space between each other. This space is created through each dancer's shifting posture as they maintain a distance between one another. The creation of the space is what frees each dancers to embellish the dance with their own styling and small, improvised movements. Therefore, salsa dance offers a nuanced way to investigate the fluid selves created by the act of partner dancing.

While flow is the exchange of qi between partners, weight is the use of gravity to balance the flow with one’s partner. Weight and flow can be used in the interest of each other but they are not exactly the same. In the full weight transfer, the center of gravity becomes vertically projected onto another body part freeing the first one so that it may be freely

moved. In partial weight transfer the center of gravity is shifted to project between the old and new support body part. The ability to use weight transfer properly enables a balanced flow in partner dance. The usage of flow and weight are different in these various partner dances. For example, in contact improvisation, it involves an exchange of weight between partners, who follow gravity and typically transfer their weight into the ground. If weight exchange is vertical in contact improvisation and ballet, then the weight exchange is horizontal in salsa and tango.

Salsa is not the only partner dance form that relies on its practitioners to build a constant relationship. Tango, waltz, and salsa exhibit different intersubjective positions. If tango is a “fatal embrace,” where dancers depend on each other for balance (Savigliano, 2005); waltz is a “refined embrace,” with a framed position that allows the dancers to show elegant and disciplined attitude. In comparison, salsa is a “fluid embrace.”

Tango involves pushing forward, leaning forward, balancing, constant changing bodies in the movement, and ongoing exchange as orienting to lines and steps (Manning, 2007). It creates a competitive relationship between partners. Tango is about tension (Savigliano, 2005) and yet its shared weight creates a sense of mutual vulnerability between tango dancers because if anyone fails, the dance can no longer continue. In contrast to these two dances, the flow in salsa is not about weight changing toward the floor (gravity) as in contact improvisation, nor tension as in tango.

Waltz is about expressing elegance as a “civilized” Western modesty and propriety (Buckland, 2011). Men and women distance themselves in a fixed frame while dancing. Therefore, the female partner is often framed as the object of spectacle as she treats the exaggerated shape at the top of their bodies by stretching her upper back and head in his arms, as McMains claims “She is the spectacle. He is the frame (McMains, 2006: 138).” The

partners interact with each other with an attitude that illustrates a clear gendered role as normally male dancers are leading with a strong and masculine control over female followers. In both tango and waltz, “closed positions” employ the leader's right hand being on the follower's back while the follower's left hand is on the leader's right shoulder.

In contrast to waltz and tango, the balanced flow in salsa is a much lighter pressure that shared between two partners through their palms. Salsa dancers create an open and changeable space between each other. Their fluid interaction is offered by continuously touching and dynamically shifting weight with ease.

On a conceptual level, as I discussed earlier in the introduction, salsa offers an cosmopolitan imagination that attracts its practitioners to travel around the world to dance salsa. This is very different from other popular world and partner dance forms, such as flamenco or tango, in which practitioners often travel to its dance roots in Seville (Spain) or Argentina. Salsa practitioners would rather travel around the world dancing salsa than go to the (contested) place where salsa has its root.

Moreover, the normally friendly environment in salsa dance floor also contributes to its popular global circulation.²² In contrast, according to dance scholar Savigliano, in a tango milonga, not only do women compete to get an invitation to dance, but also men have to work hard and cannot afford to receive a “no” when inviting a female to dance. Being rejected by a woman implies a male dancer’s failure in the club economy, which lowers his status in the tango club hierarchy (Savigliano, 1995). However, in salsa events, male dancers do not stand to “lose anything” when inviting a female to dance. Instead, even if a male dancer is rejected by a woman, he can still go on to ask the next person. His “social status” is

²² Salsa clubs in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York, where there was a large Latino presence had this friendliness and ease, are welcoming. However, salsa clubs such as in the UK and Germany, where there was a large ballroom/sport dance contingent lacked this openness.

not decreased by rejection on the dance floor. On the salsa dance floor, what is encouraged and promoted is that anyone who can dance salsa is equal and everyone should make friends with others. Many salsa practitioners that I interviewed mentioned that salsa provides them a somewhat friendly environment for meeting the opposite sex, since there is always a chance to invite another person to dance. Women also have the freedom to invite a man to dance. Sometimes it is also acceptable to dance in same-sex pairs, depending on the context. All in all, salsa offers a different kind of imagination for its practitioners than other partner dance forms.

Tactical Bodies: Flirting with Salsa

Salsa is about mutual communication between two individuals. Salsa is a combination of music, dance, and the visual images. It is associated with the feelings of unity, liberation, passion, desire, and love, as shown in the following musical lyric example:

*La gente me dice que soy loco por ser
salsero. Estoy tan enamorado,
de esta música tan preciosa,
que nació de las bellezas
de las perlas caribeñas.*

*People tell me I'm crazy for being salsero.
I 'm so in love,
With this very beautiful music
Born of beauty
Pearl of the Caribbean .*

*Yo no tengo otro remedio cuando comienzo a
escucharla.
Y retumba la tumbadora.
Y retinba la campanita.
Se me alborota la sangre
y me dan ganas de bailar.*

*I have no choice when I start to listen.
And rumbles the tumbler.
And rings the bell.
It excites my blood
and makes me want to dance.*

*Celia Cruz me enseñó.
LA SALSA ES MI ENERGIA.
Nací en el oriente.
LA SALSA ES MI ENERGIA.
Pero me gusta, ay, esta música caliente.
LA SALSA ES MI ENERGIA.
Que se llama salsa, salsa, salsa.*

*Celia Cruz taught me.
Salsa IS MY ENERGY.
I was born in the east.
Salsa IS MY ENERGY.
But I like, oh, this hot music.
SALSA IS MY ENERGY.
Is called salsa, salsa, salsa.*

Lyrics of “Salsa Es Mi Energia” in Japanese salsa band Orquesta de la Luz’s album
Salsa no tiene frontera (salsa has no border)

In salsa dance, there is also a romance, a notion of voyaging, of being in a relationship with others, of dancing for joy and not worrying about daily pressures. Salsa, as a signifier of desire and cosmopolitan attitude, is more than a dance. Seduction, flirtation, and the apparent clarity of gender roles juxtaposed with moments of reversal, exoticism, resistance, and transnational desire, are all embedded in the practice of salsa dancing. What is this image of salsa we carry in our heads? What desires does salsa meet for us?

Drawing on Savigliano’s concept of “tango’s fatal embrace” as a metaphor for the postcolonial adaptation of European/North American concepts of analysis, I assert that flirtation can serve for salsa practitioners as a metaphor of negotiating identity and the instability of cosmopolitan meaning creation. Savigliano’s investigation of tango’s global circulation and national signification serves as an important model for my research. Savigliano examines the history of tango in terms of its exotic/exoticized representations constructed to fit into the “colonizing gaze’s” demand for “passion.” I propose the idea of flirting to examine how salsa allows its practitioners to test imagined identities. I assert that there is an appreciation for strong partnering and a sense of community instead of self-reliance in the practice of salsa. Salsa allows its practitioners to engage with each other to test the water and see if there are possibilities for making connections with others.

The *Oxford Dictionary* defines flirtation as: a behavior that demonstrates a playful attraction to someone for a short period of casual experimentation with interest in a particular idea or activity. Flirtation is often thought of as frivolous, rooted in sexuality, and, by definition, ephemeral, and therefore not worthy of study. It is thus not surprising that this

term does not get serious attention in academia outside of communication studies (Phillips, 1994).²³ Most theorizations of flirtation mainly focus on flirtation at the courtship level, focusing on its communicative role in human behavior, and the politics of mutual communication (Givens, 1978; Phillips, 1994; Eglund, Spitzberg & Zormeier, 1996; McCormick & Jones, 1989). However, I will theorize the concept of “flirtation” as a way of explaining how salsa practitioners stage their individual identities and interact with other dancers.

Flirting serves a metaphor for the context of salsa’s global circulation, which bears at least three combined implications: 1) e(x/r)otic imaginings; 2) impermanence; 3) possible futures. In this sense, the dance floor demands, in the openness and closeness of relations to others, an exchange and alteration of kinesthetic experience through which the practitioners become no longer just themselves but more about each other, which facilitates the imagining of the Other in practice. Flirtation employed as a critical framework of this study is theorized on five levels of relationship found in salsa: 1) person to person; 2) person to dance forms; 3) person to capitalist modernity; 4) person to nation; 5) person to the world.

Salsa practitioners dance through a transnational salsa world and play with communal identity and identification. The body becomes a source of political meaning-making. One can apprehend the body as a source of political thinking without placing primacy upon representation, but instead using representation to provide the political frame within which bodies are defined and contested. This political thinking relates very much to the constructed self in the practice of partner-dancing.

²³ Among other theorists who have discussed flirtation, psychotherapist and literary critic Adam Phillips tries to make flirtation a main metaphor in his studies. He suggests that flirting constitutes a productive pleasure, keeping things in play, letting us get to know others in different ways, and allowing us the fascination of what is unconvincing (Phillips, 1994). For Phillips, flirtation is a metaphor for flexibility and psychic and intellectual playfulness. He extends our understanding of flirtation through the lens of literature and contemporary and traditional psychoanalytic theory. However, his theorization of flirtation is still based on individual and personal life levels, focusing exclusively on psychological analysis.

Flirtation, in my theorization, is political and diplomatic. It assumes interpersonal comfort and a self confidence. There is always a subtext in flirtation. In contrast to courtship, where men have to act and women have to behave submissive and play hard to get, flirtation allows a more dialogical negotiation between partners. It is a two way street. It is about navigation. No one is superior than the other person. Since it is fun and not serious, flirtation is pleasurable and it is also something we do to avoid social disaster. In this sense, flirtation supports the idea of a conciliatory resistance for Taiwanese salsa practitioners.

Flirting is, metaphorically speaking, a body politics. Flirting means that one does not have to objectify the other person because the other person is in the same constant negotiating position as oneself. Since it is an ongoing process, flirting begins even before dancing does. Flirting is about intersubjectivity. It brings liberation, power, and possibility. I draw on two case studies—a salsa night in Taipei, and salsa performance by the Emanuel Gat dance company— to illustrate how the concept of flirting operates in various salsa conditions to allow practitioners to work with the idea of imagined identities.



FIGURE 1.3. A Salsa Night in Taiwan. Photo by I-Wen Chang

Flirting In a Salsa Bar

As night falls, the streets are well-lit, the buildings are tall, and there seems to be no sign that the buzz in the evening air will ever stop. In the Eastern District of Taipei, the most famous district for nightlife, dancers meet in the most popular salsa bars. This is the area with the most glamorous foreign atmosphere. Local Taiwanese people and international guests all come here to drink and enjoy a night out. The Eastern District provides evidence that Taipei is a globalized city. On the street, Larry Shao's student Amanda finds her way into the salsa bar to be greeted by familiar faces. Like Amanda, they're regulars. They embrace, a show of comfort and community. They chat about recent international news. Through delicate gestures and communication, their salsa dance starts before they reach the floor.

A guy dressed in a comfortable shirt, sporting a trendy peaked hat, comes toward her. He gently extends his hand in invitation. She walks toward him, accepting his offer. All this is done without words. The music continues, with Spanish lyrics describing a longing for love and passion. The classic image of salsa is that of a pair dance—two dancers locked in the heat of an embrace with enticing gestures. Amanda and her partner dance together. They lean forward and push their weight against each other, mostly in their hands. An experienced dancer such as Amanda is able to sense the energy of her partner and adjust her response accordingly. By doing so, both Amanda and her partner can test how well the other partner is able to maintain the balance of their weight and decide how to dance with their partner.

The process is one of testing the water—determining who Amanda is dancing with and how capable he or she is. There is an exchange of energy that occurs during the dance. One can negotiate through subtle body language, changes in contact, and sensitivity to one's partner. More importantly, dancers are receptive to this communication, and the expectation is to comply with the other dancer's intentions. Partner dance is not is not as binary as it

appears; it is more dynamical than it is assumed to be by outsiders. Although there is still a gendered division of labor, of roles being played as leader and follower, there is a flow that is not exactly equal, but balanced. This is what empowering about salsa: salsa offers a new possibility to be flexible and equal within established boundaries. It creates space for negotiation within established parameters, rather than breaking boundaries completely. This is especially useful for Taiwanese practitioners who do not want to rock the boat.

A tan-skinned male dancer with a flat cap approaches Amanda, inviting her to dance. He speaks with a clear foreign accent. He is an old friend of Amanda's, who has a dual citizenship in both Taiwan and the US. While dancing, they chat about a new plan to attend an international salsa event in Korea. "It is always exciting to meet foreign friends on the dance floor," she says to him. In a surrounding with dim light and a live band singing Spanish songs, Amanda said she feels relaxed from her everyday pressures. Most Taiwanese salsa practitioners share this same feeling, as they can escape from daily routine and enjoy a moment of exotic imagining of a foreign Other. A night in the salsa club is about communication, about touching and exchanging between two dance partners, and about a transitional negotiation of imagining others. When the song finishes, Amanda's partner positions her with a dip in his arms. They smile at each other, and hug again at the end of the dance, indicating the possibility of dancing again.

Salsa asserts its power of attraction not only in Taipei, but also around the world. "We have the beauty of something that mixes all communities together," the salsa promoter Albert Torres said to a *Los Angeles Times* journalist: "I travel around the world, and I get to see the glow in people's eyes, the glee of doing something they love. Maybe they don't even understand the words. But boy, they live it, they feel it and they dream it."²⁴ Salsa is

²⁴ Gurza, Agustin. 2008. "Salsa's rhythm won't be stopped." *Los Angeles Times*, May 31.

described as a dance that evokes a utopian idea of passion embraced by various communities. In international salsa events, salsa practitioners embody a temporary and tentative connection with dancers from all over the world. Strangers meet at the international salsa events, and they dance together. They chat, drink, network with each other, and become Facebook friends. There is also the possibility of going out for a drink or late-night snacks after dancing, suggesting the possibility of future social connection.

Salsa is about agency and making choices. Through a playful and happy position, salsa dancers enjoy a decision making process that empower them. This process involves several levels of flirting. It first has to test the other dancer's ability to dance, and then try to match the ability of the others in order to balance the flow. In this flirting process, movement is not set up as a pre-experienced discipline, but more as a fluid and flexible negotiation between the two. Then, the two dancers flirt with the idea of a temporary relationship with each other. They actively engage with their partners with enjoyable and playful dance routines. Even after the end of the dance, this temporary relationship still exists. There is always a chance for them to meet again somewhere in a salsa bar. Maybe they will plan a trip together to dance salsa somewhere in the world.

The elements and aesthetic components in salsa, such as testing the water, making connections, and seductions, as well as salsa's global and cosmopolitan setting, are flirtatious qualities of salsa. Salsa allows its practitioners to play with the idea of an imagined identity. This decision making process is about having the agency to make a choice. This can allow a happy position that is playful. But play can easily turn serious, as shown in the following example.

Flirting with Death: *The Rite of Spring* by Emanuel Gat



FIGURE 1.4. *The Rite of Spring* by Emanuel Gat. Photo by Emanuel Gat. Courtesy of the Artist.



FIGURE 1.5. *The Rite of Spring* by Emanuel Gat. Photo by Emanuel Gat. Courtesy of the Artist.

On the dark stage lies a red rectangular center-stage. Five dancers, two male and three female, dance a manic, deconstructed, and threatening version of salsa. While salsa is

normally considered as a playful and flirtatious dance, it can also be serious. The dance takes place on a two-toned rectangular rug. The center is a bloody red, and the border is a duskier reddish-brown. The male dancers dress in black pants and shirts, and the female dancers wear black dresses, splitting up the sides or with décolletage and bare back. These dancers' black costumes distinguish them starkly from the red rectangular center-stage. Couples form and break up. They pick up other partners, and then start the salsa pattern again. In this 35-minute version of *The Rite of Spring*, two men and three women dance, constantly trading partners in a highly intricate neo-social dancing.

While the salsa is performed in a casual manner, the whole piece was choreographed carefully. There is not a miss of hands or wobbling steps. Although dancers' faces do not show any emotions, their movements of swirling, touching, and engaging with one another suggest an intimacy between the partners. As the music continues, the dancers' repeated partner dancing becomes more and more violent. Their repeated movements escalate into a tension between partners as the men pull the women across the stage, only exhausting rather than exhilarating or impressing their partners.

The red rug on the center stage becomes a safe zone where the dancers find structure. On the stage, youthful romance and impetuous movements gradually turn aggressive. Dancers start yanking or pushing toward each other. The dancers then stand in a close circle. It looks like they are searching for a peaceful resolution from this meeting. Only in the very end is there the apparent hint of the sacrificial scenario from the original piece— one female dancer, with her back to the audience, intentionally pins up her hair, slowly walks over to the others lying on the red rug, and lies down, left alone as the others leave. Finally and inevitably, one female dancer is cast off.

Choreographed by Emanuel Gat,²⁵ this piece is a re-invention of *The Rite of Spring*. This dance piece, the most influential work in dance history, is originally choreographed by Vaslav Nijinsky and composed by Igor Stravinsky in 1913. Numerous choreographers have staged different versions of *The Rite of Spring* in order to engage with its glorious lineage.²⁶ For instance, Pina Bausch (Wuppertal Dancetheatre) and Lin Hwai-min (Cloud Gate Dancetheatre of Taiwan) have choreographed their version of *The Rite of Spring*, addressing German nationalist ideology and the chaotic Taiwanese social situation during 1980,²⁷ respectively. In this regard, *The Rite of Spring* seems to have a magic that attracts various choreographers to make new statements in dialogue with the original piece.

Gat's choreography uses salsa to make a distinct claim in this canonical piece. His entire piece seems a stylized movement in partnered salsa dancing. According to Gat, he was

²⁵ Gat is an Israeli contemporary choreographer based in the south of France. In 2004, he founded his company, Emanuel Gat Dance, at the Suzanne Dellal Centre in Tel Aviv.

²⁶ This piece is one of the most famous and influential dance creations in dance history. It is a legend, one of the greatest successes over scandals of modernist art. In Paris, in 1913, about a hundred years ago, Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes dance company debuted "Le Sacre du Printemps (the Rite of Spring)." It was a ballet and orchestral concert work by the Russian composer Igor Stravinsky and choreographer Vaslav Nijinsky. Nijinsky's creative choreography exceeded the limits of traditional ballet and decency. For the first time ever in dance history, audiences experienced radically angular movements with pigeon-toed and downward weight, indicating a new direction of modern dance. Due to his avant-garde creation, Nijinsky's work of art caused a riotous reaction after the premier. While many audiences shouted and hissed, others tried to drown them out with applause and cheering for the new trend of dance and music. It was a scandal-like premiere (Although audiences rioted quite frequently in Paris in the early 20th century.)

The theme of the ballet is centered around a young woman who is forced to sacrifice herself by dancing until she dies. The theme and the difficult music of Stravinsky, combined with the heavy movement of Nijinsky's choreography, led to a violent uproar. Dancers behave as automata, and their only role is to enact the ritual laid down by ancient custom. An unchangeable fate that rules everything: there has to be a game to be danced by these tribal young women, and finally, a woman has to be chosen and then abandoned to her fate. She has to dance to death as some sort of sacrificial ritual.

While classical ballet dance is lifted upwards against gravity, Nijinsky's dancers were pulled down to the floor. Traditionally, ballet dancers were trained as if they did not interfere with gravity. Therefore it looks light and elegant. However, in Nijinsky's choreography, dancers were pigeon-toed, flatfooted, and discontinuous in their movements. Their different movements and poses disregard every canon of gracefulness in the traditional classical ballet. While traditional ballet dance emphasizes the legs and feet, Nijinsky stresses the upper body with big full arm gestures and tableaux created by holding dramatic poses with the arms, torso and head. They dance in a circle, renderings of a Russian ritual display of folkloric, sometimes round dances tradition.

²⁷ See Susan Manning. 1991. "German Rites: A History of Le Sacre du Printemps on the German Stage," *Dance Chronicle*, Vol. 14, No. 2/3 (1991), pp. 129-158; 陳雅萍 (Chen, Ya-Ping). 2008. "Body, History, Gender, and Power: Dance Theatre and Taiwan Society, 1980s-1990s(身體•歷史•性別•權力：舞蹈劇場與臺灣社會，1980s-1990s)," *Journal of Chinese Ritual, Theatre, and Folklore* (民俗曲藝) (161): 39-81.

listening to Stravinsky's composition on a portable music player when he happened to meet a group of salsa dancers performing in front of him. The coincidence made him realize that these two styles seemed perversely perfect for each other.²⁸ The apparent dichotomy of music and dance struck a chord with Gat. He took the iconic music and gave it a twist. His version of *the Rite of Spring* with Stravinsky's score became a big hit in the contemporary dance scene due to his use of salsa movements into a contemporary dance piece.

Gat's *The Rite of Spring* provides a means of theorizing salsa's movement without linking salsa dance to salsa music, rectifying an imbalance in which most studies of salsa focus only on salsa music. The salsa movements in this piece bring about not a ritual, primitive, scary atmosphere as shown in the original piece, but a stylized, erotic, and exotic ambiguity, indicating a possible but not yet completed imagining of death, choices, and desire. The contemporary audiences would ponder throughout the piece: who gets to die?

The two men move among the three women to partner with them all, a format similar to *rueda de casino*, where pairs of dancers form a circle and dance while swapping partners. *Rueda de casino* is a particular type of salsa square dance in Cuba, in which partners continuously trade off. In this salsa style, the woman can, with every turn, spin away from her male partner and toward a different man. This Cuban salsa style is often considered more fun and playful, as it involves continuously switching dance partners. Most of the times, *rueda de casino* is practiced as a social dance form which is like a social game, because participants constantly switch partners and thus are able to dance with each person in a group. However, this feature of playfulness also offers an unbalanced symmetry skewed by non-equivalent numbers of male and female dancers in this piece. The imbalance of two men and

²⁸ Horsley, Paul. "Getting Emanuel Gat: Israeli choreographer gives Stravinsky the Latin treatment." *The Kansas City Star*. July 30, 2006.

three women allows for astounding partner swapping and the fluid tossing around of the odd female dancer out.

Why do these seemingly delightful moments of salsa become so scary and cold in this piece? With three women and two men, there is an inevitable fight over who is able to dance with a partner. While the even numbers of male dancers' arms create a calming wave pattern, one extra woman is left standing with her back to the audience, or turning by herself with her arms encircling an imagined partner. More importantly, their faces show no emotion in contrast to dancers who are normally smiling and talking in the normal *rueda de casino* social setting. While the dancing movements in *rueda de casino* are relaxed and improvised, Gat's choreography makes these dancers move precisely and quickly. No single mistake is allowed, and they cannot take a break between moves as in the real *rueda de casino* social dance setting.

The salsa movements in Gat's *The Rite of Spring* illustrate the concept of flirting with death. Salsa dance in this piece suggests two statements not suggested by other versions of *The Rite of Spring*: first, to flirt with death and disaster expresses a desire to be alive and survive; second, to play with the idea of an unknown and possible future (to be selected as being alive or to die). Dancers move to flirt with the idea of an imagined and temporary identity (e.g. "I am with you in the same boat," or "I don't belong to the same group as you do"). The dancers' desire is to see who gets to be alive by the end of this mysterious selection. Everyone may have the chance to survive, but there is one extra person that has to be sacrificed. This is not just based on the original plot, but is also suggested by this partner dance setting.

The relationship in this situation is temporary: the dancing couple could be life partners, but the next moment someone may take your partner away, and leave you alone facing death.

As showed in this piece, the person who is left behind from the group has to be sacrificed. In this flirting with disaster, the stakes are high. In this flirting process, one's self is constantly renegotiating with others: intimidating, seducing, bribing, and gaining benefit. Throughout the performance, salsa dancing delicately alludes to the idea that partner dancing creates the possibility of imagining between the two partners.

Through the movement of switching partners, and the exchange of flows in the movements, there exists a competition between the dancing pairs. It suggests that humans are moving in the same patterns, but that if someone drops out, another dancer may fill in. In this regard, each dancer in this piece is endowed with an imagined and temporary relationship with his or her dance partner. The female dancers switch roles between victims and victimizers. They compete to dance with a male partner. The whole dance setting in this piece is a formulated pattern, suggesting a regulated discipline that everybody has to follow. The explosive violence of the movements and the non-cooperative interaction between dancers suggests that the piece still culminates in a sacrifice within salsa's movements.

Salsa can be internecine as showed in this piece. This different version of *the Rite of Spring* focuses on the flirting with erotic imagining of a future possibility, and flirting with disasters and death. They are taking a chance on something that might turn out very badly. In addition, intricacy is built into the dance. Intimidation, seduction, and bribery are all embodied in this piece. This piece illustrates how salsa as a choreographic choice and movement vocabulary can be both playful and empowered, while at the same time it can relate to serious issues, such as violence. Salsa's stakes are ultimately high in this piece (about life or death), even though they are playful. In this sense, salsa has the ability to link to the issues of resistance, gender, and national identity constructions as discussed in the later chapters.

Conclusion

Through studies of salsa dance in the studio and on dance floor, and a salsa performance by the Emanuel Gat Dance Company, I looked at the intersubjectivity in salsa dance, how dance partnering enables us to learn about communication with others, and the ability of people to change their behavior. What is significant about partner dance is that it offers us a new way to understand the relationship among people, and it brings agency to its practitioners to imagine a different self. More importantly, this dance practice might change the practitioners' political orientation or destabilize their notions of normativity.



FIGURE 1.6. Salsa dancer in the 2013 Southern California college salsa congress at Long Beach, USA. Photo by I-Wen Chang.

The role of intersubjectivity in salsa is unique due to salsa's playful movement quality, as theorized in the concept of flirtation. Flirting, I suggest, is always an act of agency and is therefore in some sense political. It is a gesture that is exhibited between one's creative

imagination, and interpretation; between one's leading and someone else's responding. The world is not just open to us, but also waiting for us to orient ourselves to it. This is a *relational* world, which we actively engage with through communication, and this connection is always changing and constantly re-shaping itself.

How does one negotiate a politics of flirtation in the complex interplay of gender, class, national identity, and globalization? How does one discuss the body and one's self without reaffirming the disciplined framework of society? How does one speak of one's identity before and after the partner dancing training process? These are the challenges inherent in writing of movement, of bodies, of politics. Flirting in salsa fights against the impulse of reiterating norms, and it continues to challenge the ontological forces of existing politics of identity, interrelationship, and intersubjectivity. All of salsa's possible intersubjectivities and interrelationships come as inventions by movement engagements between two partners. So shall we dance?

Chapter Two

How to Conform in Taiwan and How to Break the Rules

When patterns are broken, new worlds emerge.

—Tuli Kupferberg

Lilly Chen grew up in Taiwan. She was born in the early 1980s and therefore she was right on time to witness many large-scale social and educational changes. This left a huge impact on her. She sometimes feels uncomfortable and confused about how to adjust herself to the different standards between the previous conservatism and later popularized liberalism.

When she was a kid, the only available three channels on TV started their programming with singing the national anthem. The national anthem was also played at the movie theater. Before the movie started, her father would remind her: “you have to stand up straight. Be serious and respectful singing along the national anthem with others.” For Lilly, regulation about how to stand, sit, and behave was part of her early childhood. She never questioned any of these regulations in her daily life. Since her parents were both teachers, she was taught at an early age how to behave properly. In both private and public schools, everyone wore uniforms. Throughout elementary school and high school, class began and ended with the order for students to “Stand up, at attention, bow, sit down (起立, 立正, 敬禮, 坐下),” followed by calling “Good morning, Teacher,” or “Thank you, Teacher.” Students were highly regulated by the manipulation and disciplines of their bodies.

One thing that left a huge impression on Lilly was having to attend the flag-raising ceremony every morning throughout elementary school to high school. This was followed by the school president lecturing on various topics, normally something about how to be good

students now and a good citizen in the future. On a particularly hot summer day, one of Lilly's female classmates fainted under the strong sun. Remarkably, the flag-raising ceremony continued, and afterward, the teacher scolded students by saying: "pay attend to your body! Be strong and healthier!" At the time, it seemed all too reasonable to Lilly, for whom regulation had become a routine. In both junior and high schools, she also attended the military song singing contest, where everyone marched as a group. She practiced with her classmates several times a week and her class finally won a second prize in high school. Lilly had never questioned if it was reasonable to practice these military ceremonies on a daily basis.

When Lilly attended junior high school, there were stricter gender roles forced upon girls and boys in public. All females had to have their hair cut short above the ear, and males were to shave their hair completely. Luckily, Lilly was sent by her parents to an expensive private female Catholic school, where there were no restrictions on hair. In this private school, Lilly had two kinds of school uniforms: one was for everyday usage with a really long skirt, the other one was sportswear with pants. While she and her classmates would prefer to wear the sport uniform to school as it was more convenient and comfortable, the military instructors in school would require them to wear the skirt uniforms. Military instructors were those who were in charge of observing people's behavior on campus. They were everywhere in the secondary school education system. This was part of the KMT's plan to build overall control of its citizens from early childhood. Lilly took required classes from them and learned about military training and discipline skills in school. Lilly remembered that she and her classmates would argue with the school authorities, claiming that wearing pants was more comfortable, but a military instructor would reply: "a regulation is a regulation, and must be obeyed."

In order to understand how salsa challenges mainstream dance culture in Taiwan, I begin with an examination of the bodily discipline of comportment in Taiwanese society. By investigating the cultural relevance of dance in terms of various bodily disciplines and the negotiation of identities, this chapter sets up a genealogy of corporeal conformity and rule breaking in Taiwanese dance culture. First, I begin with a discussion on comportment and conformity. I assert that dance practice suggests a compliance with standards, rules, or laws within a specific social and political context. This examination of the mainstream dancing body illustrates how corporeal behavior aligns with socially accepted conventions or standards. Second, I categorize the mainstream body into three different categories in Taiwan: the Confucian body, the modern body, and the combative and national body. Last, while not all dance is resistive, I look at how social dance can offer an opportunity for resistance against and(or) reinforcement of these various mainstream bodies and social norms. I argue that salsa offers a playful and soft resistance to the dominant, mainstream ideas of comportment and bodily etiquette in Taiwan.

Ideals of Comportment

Dancing always reflects the manners of the age.

The Times, 23 May 1913.

Comportment means personal demeanor, behavior, or manner in which one conducts oneself physically. It also carries connotations of a particular bodily demeanor. Conformity is the act of matching attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors to group norms in order to fit in with that group. By adjusting one's comportment, a person can successfully conform to socio-cultural expectations of physical behavior. By examining the genealogy of comportment in a specific

cultural context, one can see how physical conformity works in a specific society over time. My examination of comportment provides a sociological perspective on how dance training acts as a form of discipline on the body, which becomes a physical form that can be codified and analyzed.

To understand how a body is the target of power, I begin with an examination on different philosophers' discussion on the techniques of the body and the discipline of the body through various forms of training. French philosopher Michel Foucault proposes an idea of a "docile body" as the target of power that may be subjected, used, transformed, and improved (Foucault, 1995:136)." He suggests that this "docile body" internalizes outside rules and conventions so that political powers can manipulate human bodies and, hence, human behavior. Foucault argues that external manipulation is gradually transformed and internalized into individual self-monitoring through this efficient disciplinary process (Foucault, 1995: 195-230). In this articulation, the phenomenon of self-monitoring enables power structures to be inserted into hidden elements of everyday life, especially through the use of the body as he describes:

What was then being formed was a policy of coercions that act upon the body, a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behavior. The human body was entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it. A "political anatomy," which was also a "mechanics of power" was being born; it defined how one may have a hold over other's bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed and the efficiency that one determines. Thus, discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, "docile bodies."(Foucault, 1995: 138)

This self-monitoring of the body may vary based on different social conditions. French sociologist Marcel Mauss describes “techniques of the body” as highly developed physical actions that embody aspects of a given culture (Mauss, 2006). Techniques may include eating, washing, sitting, sleeping, running, climbing, swimming, and dancing. Techniques are adapted by each region within specific social situations, such as an aboriginal person squatting better than a “civilized” person because regular use of chairs disable people’s ability to squat well. Mauss deploys the concept of “habitus” to discuss how techniques are learned. He defined the habitus as those aspects of culture that are anchored in the body or daily practices of individuals, groups, societies, and nations. For Mauss, the habitus includes the totality of learned habits, bodily skills, styles, tastes, and other non-discursive knowledge that may be said to “go without saying” for a specific group (Bourdieu 1990:66-67). the habitus operates beneath the level of rational thought.

Along similar lines, sociologist Norbert Elias developed this idea of habitus (Elias, 1969). For him, the habitus is the non-discursive aspect of culture that binds people into groups, including unspoken conventions and patterns of behavior, as well as styles found within body techniques. Elias analyzes the history of manners, depicting how the changes in social relations are interwoven with changes in psychic structure. Thus, social commands and prohibitions, various types of controls, become increasingly a part of “self.”

These social controls turn into a habitus that is difficult to resist even when we are alone in the intimate sphere. The behavior that civilized society demands of its members is to match the degree of regulation and restraint imposed on the expression of drives and impulses (Elias, 1969). This idea anticipates Foucault’s argument. Here we can see that the daily practice of bodily movements, as a form of habitus, are central in analyzing how outside sources shape a person’s internal self. While these philosophers focus more on quotidian

conventions of behavior, manners, and institutions, such as in the hospital, the military, and the prison, I suggest that dance as a movement practice can also be examined in how detailed bodily regulations impact on human's behavior.

Offering a dance studies' perspectives to the history of manners, dance scholar Theresa Buckland (Buckland, 2011) discusses comportment and dance in the late Victorian era and early twentieth century. Drawing on Elias's (1969) and Bourdieu's (1984) ideas of the habitus and comportment, Buckland analyzes how social dancing played an important role in establishing patterns of sociability and reinforcing class hierarchies for the social elite. She shows that the body in social dance practice is disciplined and serves specific functions in society. Although her analysis is mainly based on 1870 to 1920 England, her study illustrates how the dancing body responds to a changing society, and how the movement regulation in social dance is a form of disciplining the body to serve the interests of those in authority. This analysis is an important reference for me to look at how dance can be part of everyday comportment to conform to historical particularities.

The above mentioned philosophers (except Buckland) look at the body as being manipulated by specific social condition, thus having little agency in responding to the norms of any historical particularities. However, this chapter suggests that while not all dance is resistive, social dance does not always lead to conform to social norms. In addition, while these philosophers discuss the internalization of discipline as specific mainly to the Western, post-Enlightenment society, this same discipline of manipulating the body has been brought to non-Western societies with the introduction of modernization. In Taiwan, modernization was introduced during the early twentieth century, when the Japanese colonized Taiwan. In looking at how bodies in dance engage with the ideas of corporeal conformity in Taiwan, this chapter traces how the body is a carrier of power relations in Taiwanese society throughout

history.

In what follows, I examine three mainstream bodies: the Confucian body, the modern body, and the combative and national body, to illustrate how each kind of body acts as a response to what came before. Next, I look at how social dance resists and(or) reinforces these mainstream bodies. Because this dissertation focuses on contemporary salsa dance in Taiwanese society, I start with the examination of the Confucian body that has influenced Taiwan from the pre-Japanese colonial era to the present day (since KTM came²⁹). I then go on to examine the modern body and the combative and national body from the Japanese colonial era to the 1960s KMT governed Taiwan. While each mainstream body is constructed against the previous regime or cultural identity, I look at how social dance can sometimes both rebel against or contribute to the disciplining of bodies that are mainly manipulated by the government authority. The complexity of social dance as both resistant and(or) reinforcing of conformity in different contexts tells us that the body is a prerequisite for self-identity and a site of struggle.

The Confucian Body: the Disciplined and Gendered Body

Taiwanese people are influenced by the construction of Confucian ideas and the government policy of regulation on their bodily comportment from the pre-Japanese colonial era to the present day. The contemporary idea of Confucianism is especially influenced by the KMT government's policy. In order to understand this phenomenon better, it is important for us to understand how traditional Chinese culture in Taiwan disciplines the Taiwanese body, especially those Confucian bodily disciplines introduced by the the KMT government.

²⁹ KMT stands for The Kuomintang. It is a political party in the Republic of China (ROC in Taiwan). It is the current ruling political party in Taiwan. The name is often translated as the Chinese Nationalist Party.

Following the Confucian norms, men and women are expected to behave differently according to social standards. I start with a discussion of masculinity in Confucianism, and then go on to the Confucian femininity before addressing commonalities in the Confucian disciplined bodies for both genders.

Taiwan has a history of multiple colonizations, so here I focus mostly on the long tradition of Chinese influence and Confucian conservatism. Human relationships in Confucian society are regulated in a hierarchical order. The interpersonal interactions are based on five types of relationships (五倫), including those between father and son, husband and wife, ruler and ruled, elder brother and younger brother, and between friends. Social harmony results from everyone “knowing his or her place and feeling good about it (各安其位)” in the “natural order (順天道)”, and “playing his or her role accordingly (不踰矩)”. Based on each person’s particular situation in relation to others, everyone has his or her own duties. Here we can see that a Confucian ideal society includes strict codes of ethics and etiquettes.

In “Theorizing Chinese Masculinity: Society and Gender in China,” Kam Louie identifies the two concepts, *wen* and *wu* (文-武) as a crux to conceptualize Chinese masculinity overtime. *Wen* means cultural attainment, civil, literary knowledge, the conceptual, and is centered around scholars and gentlemen; *wu* means power, martial valor, martial arts, military leadership, physical skills, the corporeal, and is typically attributed to warriors. *Wen* and *wu* embody different forms of masculinity that are specific to Chinese men. For example, in famous Chinese stories, such as “Butterfly Lovers,” the most famous tragic love story of a pair of lovers, Liang Shanbo (梁山伯) and Zhu Yingtai (祝英台) meet each other when the woman, Zhu Yingtai, pretends to be a *wen* man in order to attend school.

Similarly, in Hua Mulan (花木蘭)'s story, she takes her father's place in the army by pretending to be a *wu* man. Both of these women cross-dressed as male and performed either *wen* or *wu* masculinity to pass as men. Scholars have argued that these stories indicate how *wen* and *wu* are specifically male identities in Chinese culture (Wang, 2006; Louie, 2002). In these two stories, women adapted those codes in order to pass as men and appropriate masculine privilege. It signals an awareness in Chinese literature that gender is a performance and that masculinity is accessible at least to exceptional women.

Both the *wen* and *wu* ideals favor the Confucian virtue of moral demands, self control and restraint, and resistance to the faults associated with femininity (i.e., sexual pleasure) (Louie, 2002). Additionally, “*wen wu shuang quan* (文武雙全),” a common Chinese idiom, suggests that a man who can embody both *wen* and *wu* qualities is considered to be an ideal man. However, even though both *wen* and *wu* represent masculinity, *wen* takes a somewhat superior position over *wu* in Chinese history (Geng, 2004). The *wen* ideal is rooted in Confucianism. In the traditional Chinese culture, Confucius represents intelligence, virtue, and proper manners. Therefore, scholars normally enjoy a higher social status than those of warriors, and women tend to like *wen* men more than *wu* men (Geng, 2004).

Confucius said, “with great solid qualities of *wen* and accomplishments, one man can become a virtue man of *junzi*. (文質彬彬，然後君子).” The word *junzi* (君子, literary means: lord's son) is a Chinese philosophical term which means "gentleman" or "superior person.”³⁰ In Confucianism, *junzi* represents the ideal personality. It has both a political and moral meaning. *Junzi* must be a man who has a strong moral position. He achieves an inner peace by not disobeying his ethics. He would never be controlled by sensual and emotional

³⁰ It can also be translated as "exemplary person". Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr., *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation*.

pleasures. In Confucianism, *junzi* sustained the functions of a hierarchal government system. The ultimate goal of achieving a *junzi* is to govern his behavior in his family, as well as in the society.

This ideas of *junzi* has been pushed forward since the Song and Ming dynasties, as Neo-Confucianism (宋明理學) became prominent. Cheng-Zhu school was one of the major philosophical schools of Neo-Confucianism, based on the ideas of the Neo-Confucian philosophers Cheng Yi (程頤, 1033-1107), Cheng Hao (程顥, 1032–1085) and Zhu Xi (朱熹, 1130-1200). Cheng Yi (程頤, 1033-1107). Neo-Confucianism focused on the Confucian code of ethics (禮教). For example, Zhu Xi described the core moral practice as “keep the justice, eliminate the human desire (存天理，滅人欲).” Cheng Yi said that for women, “death by starvation is better than loss of virginity (餓死事小，失節事大).” In these practices, Neo-Confucianism set up a clear moral standard to regulate both man's and women’s bodily and behavioral conduct.

Within the Confucian code of ethics, *Li* (禮) plays an important role in regulating people’s behaviors. *Li* can be translated as rite, reason, and order in nature. In its realization in human social conditions, it means social customs, etiquette, morals, and rules of proper behavior taught by authorities (including fathers, elders, and governors). *Li* embodies the hierarchical structure of interpersonal interactions. Through *Li* practice, such as the manipulation of tea drinking, calling titles, ritual ceremony, and behavioral governance, one can embody the Confucian ideas of filial piety (孝), righteousness, and loyalty toward the family and the nation (Wright and Twitchett, 1962).

Women’s bodies are more restricted and controlled, though Confucian bodily disciplines

dictate proper behavior for both men and women. In women's roles, the ideal Confucian woman should be soft-spoken and submissive. There is a "Three Obediences and Four Virtues (三從四德)" as a set of basic moral principles specifically for women in Confucianism. According to the Three Obediences, a woman should serve the family and respect men, "obeying her father before marriage, her husband after marriage, and her son when widowed (未嫁從父、出嫁從夫、夫死從子)." Women must always be humble, yielding, and reverential in relation to men (Zheng, 1999). Four virtues are morality, proper speech, modest manner/appearance, and diligent work. In short, the ideal Confucian woman "belongs" to the family, and there is no self-determination or free will. This Confucian feminine ideal would be opposed to the stereotype of the ideal individualistic and liberated woman.

Confucian ideals require women to behave regulated and submissive. One relevant example of this is the old Chinese saying that states "[women] must be decent when [they] stand and sit (站有站相，坐有坐相)."³¹ "Decent" in this common interpretation of the edict means that women must keep their legs together and their hands on their knees when they sit. When women stand, they have to stand up straight and not sway. Slouching and fidgeting are also frowned upon. Under these regulations of the body, people shall always stand up straight and tall, and avoid rocking the lower part of their bodies while standing or sitting down. Furthermore, there is an old saying by Mencius (a famous Confucian scholar): "Men and women should not touch each other when giving or receiving an item (男女授受不親)," which demands a strictly regulated body distance between men and women.

³¹ These sayings of regulating the body are from the book *Di Zi Gui* (弟子規, Standards for being a Good Pupil and Child), written by Li Yuxiu during the Qing Dynasty. This book is based on Confucius ideas that emphasize the basic guidelines for being a good person and living peacefully with others.

These Confucian ideals entered Taiwan with Chinese immigration, and have a huge impact on the contemporary Taiwanese society. The female body is restricted in Taiwanese society and a woman's body position in public is highly regulated. This has been extended to any general public contact. The Confucian traditions still operate in contemporary Taiwan. For example, contemporary Taiwanese girls learn these manners at home from their parents. They are also expected to obey these rules at school, and high school teachers would frequently ask them to behave according to these standards.

Confucian Ideals Facilitated by the KMT Government

This Confucian ideal woman is reinforced in the national celebrated image of *xianqi liangmu* (賢妻良母, virtuous wife and good mother) that was introduced by KMT regime in Taiwan since the 1950s. In Confucius ideas, “to govern the country (and bring peace to all), one should first be able to govern one's family; to govern one's family successfully, one should first learn to govern oneself (修身齊家治國平天下).”³² Therefore, this discourse of *xianqi liangmu* is especially popular in education to make better mothers and wives, serving the nationalist goal of building better housekeepers and citizens (Hsu, 1997; Mei, 2004). From the 1950s to 1980s, various social projects were established to recruit women as national subjects for political mobilization. The dominant discourse of women's domestic role is to help to maintain “the foundation of Chinese tradition and morality” to generate and validate the nation as the authoritarian regime as a family-state. A modern Chinese woman in Taiwan was expected to extend her love from the family to the nation (Chang, 2009).

In contrast to the idealization of married women via domesticity, the KMT government

³² from Confucius. 2013. *The Great Learning* (大學). Lanham: Start Publishing LLC.

encouraged lower class and working class younger women to participate in the workforce prior to marriage (Diamond, 1973: 856). After marriage, working class women were encouraged to work at home to provide labor for manufacturing in the “at home family factory (家庭代工廠),” such as working at home for assembling toys and clothes. During the 1960s and 1970s, Taiwan was able to build up its export-oriented manufacturing modernization partially because of the employment of women, who provided a cheap and elastic source of labor. This had two key impacts: while the middle-upper class women were expected to contribute to national stability as wives, mothers, and volunteer workers, the working class women contributed crucially to their family income through factory labor in and out of their household (Farris, 2004: 346). The middle-class women left the labor force after marriage while working class women stayed on. The KMT’s policy of promoting women at home not only made women subordinate to the patriarchal family but also exploited women as workers in the global, capitalist assembly line (Lee, 2003).

From 1966 to 1976, the Chinese Cultural Revolution took place in China. It aimed to preserve a “true” Communist ideology by purging remnants of capitalist and traditional elements from Chinese society in PRC ruled China. In response to this, Chiang Kai-shek announced the Chinese Cultural Renaissance Movement in 1966 (Guy, 2005). This counter action was facilitated by the KMT government to promote neo-traditionalist conservatism. By reviving the Confucianist morality and the preservation of traditional culture, KMT aimed to promote itself as the foremost champion of Taiwan and the true reservoir of Chinese cultural tradition. The Chinese Cultural Renaissance Movement promulgation committee published “Necessary Basic Knowledge for the Lives of Citizens (國民生活須知)” and “Standards of Etiquette for Citizens (國民禮儀規範),” providing instructions for modern

hygiene down to the minute detail, such as how to sit properly, how to behave during a formal dinner, how to dress when going out, and so forth. In this way, KMT regime tried to discipline the citizen's body to the most extreme. As Foucault and Elias have argued, the body becomes a tool that is manipulated by authorities through the civilization process (Foucault, 1995; Elias, 1969). At the same time, organizations in Taiwan, such as Family Planning Association, China (中國家庭計畫協會) and ROC Women's Association (台灣省婦女會), responded to the Chinese Cultural Renaissance Movement by publishing family education manuals and emphasizing the importance of *xianqi liangmu* (Ji, 2005). Again, women are encouraged to stay at home educating children and preserving the traditional Confucian value for nationalist purposes.

Under the social and political conditions in Taiwan, individuals are expected to conform to Confucian rules of comportment. On the one hand, men are expected to be moral, scholarly, self restraint, and restrict themselves from erotic pleasure. On the other hand, most women are socialized to behave according to this expectation of being a submissive and Confucian ideal woman.

Women's Movements in Taiwan

During the 70s, the first women's movement in Taiwan was introduced by a Harvard trained scholar, Annette Lu Hsiu-lien (呂秀蓮) (Farris, 2004:348) who wrote the first feminist book in Taiwan, *Xin nü xing zhu yi* (新女性主義, New Feminism, 1974).³³ When Lu went back to Taiwan from the US in 1971, there was a movement to initiate a new law to

³³ As a prominent feminist activist, Lu is also a member of the Democratic Progressive Party and one of Taiwan's independence advocates. In 1979, she was sentenced by a KMT led military court to 12 years in prison (she ended up being in jail for 5 years until 1985) for her Taiwanese independence movement activities. From 2000 to 2008, she was the Vice President in Taiwan.

restrict women's higher education acceptance rate because people believe that "it is a waste of resources for women to be educated in higher education as they should serve the family first (Lu, 1974)." Lu criticized gender inequalities in educational levels and in the legal system, such as gendered low-paying jobs, unequal laws against women, and the continued denigration of women within a Confucian value system (Lu, 1974). Since then, various local feminist movements have taken place in Taiwan. In 1984, Lee Yuan-chen's (李元貞)'s liberal feminism pushed the awakening feminist's petition to facilitate passage of the legalization of abortion. In 1985, the "Enforcement Rules of Genetic Health Act (優生保健法)" was passed, giving women the legal right to choose abortion and have more control over their own bodies. Finally, the Gender Equity Education Act (兩性平等教育法) was made into law in 2004.

As the gender policies that focus on the equality of women in educational, economic, and political levels gradually become legalized, sexual politics that focus on women's sexual, erotic, and bodily liberation received more attention. While the first generation feminist activists used ideological compromise with the authoritarian regime's Confucian ideas as a common strategy to ensure the movement's survival during the 1970s to 1980s, subsequent activists became more radical. For example, Ho Chuen-jeui (何春蕤, Josephine Ho) carried a controversial slogan "No sexual harassment; I want sexual climax (不要性騷擾，只要性高潮)" in a public protest in 1994. While Ho advocated sexual liberation for women and challenged heterosexual norms, the Taiwanese LGBT movement also gained strength since the late 1990s. Taiwan has become one of the most gay friendly countries in Asia.³⁴ For

³⁴ See International Bar Association, Helmut Graupner, and Phillip Tahmindjis. 2005. *Sexuality and human rights: a global overview*. Binghamton, NY: Harrington Park Press. p185.

example, both male and female same-sex sexual activity are legal in Taiwan. In 2003 and 2007, discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in education and employment have been banned into law. Although not yet passed, the government has proposed the legalization of same-sex marriage since 2003, and this campaign is still ongoing.

Because of all of these political movements that took place in Taiwan and changed the legal system for a more gender equal society, Taiwanese women receive better education and are able to find jobs on their own today than in the past. However, if they want to get married, they still bear the traditional expectation of being a “virtuous wife and good mother.” In 2013, a new report by MasterCard entitled “Women Power and Economic Growth in Asia” shows that while the secondary education enrollment for women is 98.96% and tertiary education enrollment for women is 84.43% in Taiwan (ranked number 2 in Asia). However, the labor force participation rate for Taiwanese women is only 50.2% (ranked number 10 in Asian countries)³⁵. Compared to nearby Asian countries, Taiwanese women hold a considerably more advantageous position regarding educational attainment and wages (Brinton, 2001). However, women are still expected to be family centered wives and mothers.

According to Lan Pei-chia (藍佩嘉), a professor of sociology at National Taiwan University, because of the higher education and enhanced economic independence, women no longer rely on marriage for material support. Instead, they look forward to a relationship based on communication, sharing and equality (Lan, 2010). However, in a still male-centered

³⁵ Simon Ogus, with introduction by Yuwa Hedrick-Wong, “Women power and economic growth in Asia,” in *MasterCard Report*. 2013.

society, a sexual double standard is common.³⁶ The traditional concept of marriage still remains that a woman should be responsible for housework for the family. As a result, women with higher degrees are most likely to be unmarried in Taiwan.³⁷ The lack of welfare system of childcare and elder care, and the traditional attitude toward women as good wives, contribute to Taiwanese women's refusal of marriage and the world lowest giving birth rate (Lan, 2010).³⁸

How to Perform Femininity Correct in Contemporary Taiwan

Contemporary Taiwanese women are struggling between conservative norms and a new concept of liberation from the women's movements in Taiwan. In response to this double bind for women, I suggest that mainstream Taiwanese women use cuteness as a way to perform femininity correct in Taiwan. They behave "cute" in order to be considered attractive

³⁶ For example, in Taiwan, authoritative groups, such as parent, the national education system, and the medical establishment, instilled feelings of guilt about sexual activities outside of marital context. In addition, adultery is still a crime Taiwan, but most of the time only the other woman would be blamed and punished by the society, whereas the man who has affairs would be just considered as "making a mistake that every men in the world would make(犯了全天下男人都會犯的錯)" and easily be forgiven by family members and society. There is a specific and popular term "little three (小三)" to indicate the "other woman," but no term to indicate the husband who cheats. This linguistic imbalance is indicative of the double standard at play. Additionally, with the decrease of marriage rate, women are normally targeted as the one who should be blamed. For example, Women above thirty and have not yet married are called as "leftover women(剩女)" or "underdog (敗犬)," a term from Japan that specifically describes that "a woman who is beautiful and has a successful career but not yet married after 30 is a underdog, while a normal and not talented woman is a top dog if she is married and has a kid." The low marriage rate in this condition is of course considered as "the women's fault." While the well-educated and self-sufficient women become a problem as the "underdog" phenomena in Taiwan, economically not sufficient men in Taiwan always have an alternative way to fulfill the Confucian duty of domesticity by marrying a foreign bride. Not long ago, the mayor of Taipei called for "importing" more foreign brides from South-East Asia to solve the problem of low marriage rates in a public forum discussing gender issues (See Chyan, Amy. 2015. 'Import bride' remark haunts Taipei Mayor," *The China Post* (March 9, 2015). Therefore, we can see that a sexual double standard exists in Taiwan.

³⁷ Chang, Yi-Chuan and Li, Jui-Chung Allen, 2011, "Trends in the Educational Differentials in Marriage Formation among Taiwanese Women", paper presented at *2011 Annual Meeting of the Population Association of America*, Washington, DC: Population Association of America, 2011-03-31 ~ 2011-04-02.

³⁸ *The Economist* points out that the percentage of unmarried women aged between 35-49 in regions such as Japan, Taiwan, and Hong Kong has risen rapidly from a range of 2-6% to 15-20% in the three decades. This rank is much higher than that for the same age range in the UK and the US (about 13-15%). See *The Economist* (August 20, 2011)

and acceptable in Taiwanese society alongside the Confucian tradition and new modern ideals of egalitarianism, coupled with commercialism. In addition, Japanese Kawaii (cute) culture also influences Taiwanese cute culture. In order to understand this societal phenomenon, we must first look at what it means to be “cute” in Taiwan.

Cute as a term is normally used in reference to a person, animal, or small object that arouses feelings of pity, tenderness, and a desire for someone to take care of. While children of both sexes are often described as cute in Chinese culture, at adolescence this term becomes mostly marked for reference to females, and males are not described as cute. Being cute communicates vulnerability, being non-threatening, and being in need of help. Similarly, Kawaii, or cuteness has been described as a style which is “infantile and delicate at the same time as being pretty (Yamane, 1990)” in Japan. For Taiwanese women, to be cute means to be lovable and adorable. This little girl image poses no threat to the male dominant society. As a result, cuteness and vulnerability are imperceptibly inculcated in Taiwanese women’s everyday lives, as well as in bodily comportment.

While we may locate the cultural logic of modern female cuteness in the Confucian ideal that women need to be submissive and non-threatening, it is also a way of negotiating Confucianist norms alongside modern ideals of egalitarianism coupled with

commercialism.³⁹ The cute emphasis is on attractiveness, aligning with a modern objectification of women. It carries both an infantilization and a simultaneous sexualization of women. Cuteness can be seen as a capitalist sexual objectification that combines with a cultural value on non-threatening sexuality. These cute styles and manners constitute a composite of social identity and dispositions that reflect and naturalize the asymmetrical gender conditions. Additionally, this obsession with cute is a huge East Asian phenomenon, especially in Japan. This style saturated the multi-media and consumer goods since the 1980s (Kinsella, 1995). While academic discourse has focused on the situation in Japan, where cute culture began to take off in the 1980s, the popularity of Japanese culture as a trend in Taiwan also contributes to this cute fashion in Taiwan.

This vulnerability implied by women's cuteness can be seen in visual images through mass media. During the 1980s, the women's magazine was first introduced in Taiwan and brought a huge amount of visual images to illustrate how women's ideal behaviors and appearance were constructed over time. In these magazines, Asian women are depicted as innocent and non-threatening, girlish, whereas Western women can be portrayed as sexy and seductive (Maynard, and Taylor, 1999; Zhou and Belk, 2004). Given the Confucian and cuteness cultural values, Taiwanese consumers might prefer that Western models exhibit a

³⁹ Bodybuilding and fitness (健美, 健身, Robust Beauty) is another example of objectifying women's bodies in the consumer society in Taiwan. Fitness clubs were introduced by foreign investors in the 1980s in Taiwan. Although fitness clubs have gradually become popular since the early 2000s (Qiu, 2003), most of the major chain fitness clubs, such as California Fitness (加州健身中心) and Alexander Health Club (亞力山大健康休閒俱樂部), were closed in the late 2000s. Fitness culture was once viewed as meaningful and valuable. However, when the focus on the body turned from nationalist physical education toward consumer culture, the fitness cultural body can only be viewed through a personal (individual) muscular satisfaction level, but not as a circulating code of body image for the symbolic economy. Therefore, a fit body as a cultural capital did not work well in Taiwan (Wang, 2004). Extending this argument, I suggest that the attempt to build a fit female body in Taiwan failed also due to the cultural logic of Confucian ideal that women need to be non-threatening. In this dissertation, I assert that cuteness is a way of negotiating Confucianist norms alongside modern ideals of commercialism, where salsa merges as a form of resistance to this mainstream cute culture. In addition, while the fitness body focuses on individual achievement, the salsa body is about interpersonal relationships, which offers more agency for women's sexual desire. Therefore, in this section I focus on the cute culture, not the fitness culture, in order to make a contrast with salsa.

corporeal sexuality—something that might be considered culturally inappropriate for Chinese models (O’Barr, 1994). Asian models appeared more frequently in advertisements for hair and skin beauty products, whereas Western models dominated the clothing category (Frith, Cheng, and Shaw, 2004). Western models were shown more frequently than Asian models in sexy dress as a seductive beauty types, whereas Asian models would appear more frequently in ads featuring cute, girly beauty types (Karan and Feng, 2010).

These studies demonstrate that how the ideal Taiwanese women should look like. The childlike style of cute and girlish images diminish Asian women’s standing in society as full-fledged adults. While sexiness invokes images of strength and professionalism, depicting women (no matter what race) as strong, professional, and independent may be more threatening to men. Therefore, this type of portrayal of women may be avoided by advertisements in Asian countries (Frith, Cheng, and Shaw, 2004). Taiwanese women seem to internalize these media representations in their ideas of how to dress, behave, and be attractive in their everyday lives. Female undergraduate students in Taiwan dress up and behave according to these norms of beauty as represented in the media. In order to live up to beauty ideals, they perform cuteness as the right femininity that is commonly accepted in the society.

On the other hand, men tend to treat women better when they act cute. Women may also perform cuteness because they are aware of the associated social advantages. Cuteness becomes a tool for women to “utilize a cute manner for their own benefit” (Chuang, 2005). A 2014 screened film *Women Who Flirt*⁴⁰ (撒嬌女人最好命, literally means “women who can act helpless and cute would have the best in her life”) in China vividly illustrates the

⁴⁰ “Women who flirt” is the official English title for this Chinese drama. However, “flirt” in this title is a very different understanding of flirting from what I proposed in my analysis.

stereotypical phenomenon of gaining power through cuteness in a patriarchal society in East Asia from a Chinese perspective. The story of this movie is about a “cute” Taiwanese woman who wins the Chinese male protagonist’s love, while the leading Chinese female character has to learn to use cuteness to compete to win back the man's affections. In the end of the film, the Chinese leading female character gives up behaving cute, but still attracts the Chinese leading male character. This film first illustrates how being cute is a performance as it can be learned through practice. It also ironically suggests that cuteness from Taiwan may not work that well in China. However, we have to acknowledge that this film also shows the stereotypical Taiwanese cute woman for the Chinese audience and Taiwanese women are portrayed as using cuteness to gain their benefits within a patriarchy society.

Nevertheless, this film is inspired from one of a best-selling women’s self-help books of the same title. The book was written by a Taiwanese man to teach women how to behave “cute” and “helpless” to get an ideal man. In this sense, the book also indicates that marrying a man is the ultimate life goal for women because she would “have the best in her life” as the book title suggests. This illustrates that cuteness as power can work within the patriarchal structure, and therefore serves to reproduce the traditional gender relations in Taiwan.

Today, Taiwanese womanhood is informed by three contradictory influences: conservative Confucian norms that are affiliated with the government policy, the progressive ideals of feminist movement that started since the 1970s, and cuteness as a capitalist sexual objectification that combines with a cultural value on non-threatening sexuality. Under these circumstances, would it be possible for the Taiwanese women to navigate these oppositional constructed ideas of womanhood?

The Salsa Dancing Body versus the Confucian Body



FIGURE 2.1. Salsa Dancing Couples in Taipei. Photo by I-Wen Chang.

Is it possible for a Taiwanese woman to behave differently than a disciplined Confucian body or a cute body? Can a Taiwanese woman embrace erotic desire without being subject to a patriarchal, objectifying gaze? Can women in Taiwanese society express sexiness instead of cuteness? Can Taiwanese women reclaim sexiness as a source of strength and agency rather than as a site of objectification? Contrary to the Confucian disciplined feminine character, or a cute behavior that allows women to play with a non-threatening female role, I suggest that salsa allows Taiwanese women to challenge this culturally constructed persona by encouraging them to embrace their sexuality.

Salsa, in general, expresses an exoticized and eroticized Latin passion, especially performed in the US context. Latin dances have often been stereotyped as a sexy, sensual dance. Political dance scholar Marta Savigliano proposes the idea of “passion” as a form of “emotional capital.” She identifies the Western appropriation of Latin dance as one form of

cultural imperialist expansion (Savigliano, 1995). Extending Savigliano's argument, dance scholar Juliet McMains has examined the racial implications of Latin-ness in American DanceSport and how gender and sexuality contribute to racial discourse. She argues that the ballroom dance industry reinforces global stereotypes of primitive, wild, sexual, Latin Others linked to commodification and racial stereotyping. She illustrates that participating as a DanceSport competitor or spectator is a means of negotiating one's own racial and class position by mediating cultural anxiety about public displays of sexuality. In McMains' analysis, "sexy" movements, such as hip action in salsa, is the major reference to movements from sexual intercourse (McMains, 2006).⁴¹ Based on this narration, the overstated choreographed gestures in salsa result from the Americanized imaginings of the exotic.

From their analysis, we can see that salsa, as a Latin dance form, is desired within Americanized imaginations of Latin-ness, and is associated with Latin stereotypes that pervade the imagination: the macho forceful male and the sexy enticing female. Male dancers display a macho, masculine, and virile demeanor; female dancers perform an erotic, passionate, hot "feminine" quality. The dancers forge these stereotyped gender distinctions through overstated choreographed gestures (Vermay, 1994: 58). The heightened portrayal of heterosexuality that is present in salsa resembles these depictions of masculinity and femininity. In this way, salsa embodies an image of heterosexuality.

In addition, the concept of sexy salsa is referenced by mass media from the West to the rest of the world. The salsa industry thrives on the Hollywood industry's eroticized representation of salsa-dancing Latinas/os and black. Media representations offer variations on the theme of salsa. For example, the Hollywood industry has produced films such as *Dirty*

⁴¹ Salsa's hip movements are the rotations of the hips around the spine. This hip motion is resulted from the alternate bending and straightening action of the knees. Salsa hip movements are both side to side and front to back.

Dancing: Havana night (2004), *Selena* (1997), and *Salsa* (1988). In the earlier versions of these particular dance movies, they depict Latinas/os as threateningly erotic, and consumed by their (hetero)sexuality within a libidinal economy (Garcia, 2013:14). The circulation of salsa dancing in the Hollywood industry often reproduces a scenario in which white leading ladies learn to connect with their sexuality by becoming “Latina” on the dance floor (Garcia, 2013:139). This plot convention suggests that by mastering salsa, anyone has the ability to transform into a stereotypical passionate Latina. This image of salsa as a passionate and liberatory circulates around the world through the Western mass media. This idea of salsa as liberatory is important to salsa’s popularity in Taiwan.

The erotic imagination of salsa offers three levels of strategic and liberatory resistance for Taiwanese practitioners: first, salsa mobilizes the Taiwanese practitioner’s body and enables them to touch and move with the opposite sex while in public; second, salsa in Taiwan is much less showy and flashy, and thus less likely to facilitate objectification. While lifts and dips requires a gendered division of labor, less showy and flashy Taiwanese salsa allows male and female dancers to move with a comparable aesthetic; third, due to the specifics of Taiwanese gender politics, although salsa still holds a conventional structure, it also offers a strategic and local resistance for Taiwanese female practitioners by providing a platform to experiment with staged sexual desire. Salsa provides a different kind of discipline specific to the Taiwanese context. I will illustrate these three localized strategic resistances in Taiwan accordingly.

To begin with, due to the Confucian tradition in Taiwan, men and women normally do not touch, hug, or interact closely with each other's bodies in public. Salsa offers a legitimate way for male and female dancers to perform their sexual desire toward each other. For example, James Wang, a dance instructor from Taiwan, cites watching the movies *Shall We*

Dance (2004) and *Dirty Dancing: Havana Nights* (2004) as the reasons he started salsa dancing. The scenes of passionate dancing attracted his attention, and in 2006 Wang attended a meeting at the Rotary International,⁴² where one of the members shared salsa with him as a learning experience:

“I am able to hold hands with girls!”

It was the beginning of Wang’s salsa journey. During an interview Wang admitted,⁴³ “Yes, it was not an attraction that came from high taste or out of a respectable reasoning.” But, once he began, Wang enjoyed the feeling of dancing salsa. He said, “I find a way to express myself, to listen to the music, and feel challenged and am able to express my body and feeling, which is hard for me to do so before.” Wang emphasizes how salsa’s style is different from ballroom dance, which focuses more on a regulated, choreographed, and competitive body. He states that salsa provides a way to move with a soft, smooth, and an “S” shape to the body. This body, based on Wang’s description, is free, passionate, expressive, and enables a “flow.” He emphasized: “It is in the salsa dance floor, it is in this place that turns me into another person.” Wang believes the salsa styles he learned in Taiwan allows him to be more sensual, and more attractive to women.

Larry Shao’s art works, a homonymy loop Single Channel Video Installation named *the Blurring of Salsa and Life* (2010), offers another example to illustrate how salsa practitioners break the traditional gender rules through salsa dance. The *Blurring of Salsa and Life* is a video installation documenting eight interviews of people describing their personal

⁴² Rotary International (also known as Rotary Club) is an international service organization whose stated purpose is to bring together business and professional leaders to network. In Taiwan, only those who are above middle class would be part of it.

⁴³ This interview was done in Taipei on June 28, 2012.

relationships with salsa dancing. Shao quotes Allan Kaprow,⁴⁴ “the line between art and life should be kept as fluid, and perhaps indistinct, as possible,”⁴⁵ to explain this artwork.

Through interviews with various Taiwanese salsa practitioners, Shao focuses on what salsa offers for the local Taiwanese. This video installation suggests that the boundary between salsa itself and salsa practitioners’ lives is blurring. For him, salsa is not just about dancing, but also involves in the construction of individual identity and liberation from the pressure of everyday life.

In this video, one foreign salsa instructor mentions that it is surprising “how many salsa people are engineers in Asia, even though they are very analytical.” Another interviewee, whose job is as an engineer, claims that he is hired by an international enterprise because he mentions that he can dance salsa in the job interview with a Latin American interviewer. He said “interviewees before me all had strong portfolios (with) solid technical background.” However, he suggests that the interviewer sees salsa as indicative of his management abilities and communication skills that make him more sociable in his job environment. “Salsa is a very international activity. It becomes useful in many occasions. I can dance (and) meet people,” he concludes. Another male interviewee in this video said: “I work at the logistics department of a(n) electronics store. I would be a nerd without salsa. Probably watch TV and play online games all day long. I wouldn’t have many friends or travel abroad to dance.” One of a female interviewee describes how she can “feel” the personality of the opposite sex by dancing with them. Another female interviewee also share this similar feeling: “women can express a sexy side of their nature in salsa or softer characteristics, as well as strong and

⁴⁴ Allan Kaprow is an American artist who is a pioneer in establishing the concepts of happenings, a form of spontaneous, non-linear action, revolutionized the practice of performance art.

⁴⁵ Dezeuze, Anna. "Transfiguration of the Commonplace," *Variant* 22 (Spring 2005).

determine sides too. (She is) with determinations, expressing firm features in femininity.”⁴⁶

The narration in this video focuses not only on the everyday lives-ness of salsa by these Taiwanese practitioners, but also how salsa allows a different gendered dimension in Taiwan. In Taiwan, those who work in the high-tech industries as engineers are frequently being viewed as stereotypical nerdy guy. However, the stereotypical nerdy men find a new way to meet new friends by dancing salsa. At the same time, women also find a new language to express their femininity with strong and determined characters. Shao strategically makes a cartoon figure of himself in this video. By illustrating how this cartoon figure chooses how to dress and move, he demonstrates how to behave as a salsa dancer properly, and thus attracts women’s attention. The everyday live-ness in this video installation is about how to subtly mimic of a courtship and how to express men and women’s sexuality beyond the mainstream norms.

In addition, dancers reclaim their masculinity by dancing the “macho” salsa to be more masculine. For example, the aforementioned salsa instructor and artist Larry Shao— a Taiwanese American who studied in the US— explains that as an Asian man in the US context, he found it hard for him to behave as a “man.” Salsa gives Shao a referential framework through which he can express his emotion and gaining masculinity.⁴⁷ He has a vivid expression of his own experience in salsa: “When I was in the US, I found it was hard for me to define myself as a man from my culture of reference. I didn’t know how to interact with girls. However, salsa provides me with a model for being like a man. I find it is rare for

⁴⁶ These direct quotes are from the subtitles in Shao’s installation video.

⁴⁷ This concept of masculinity in the practice of salsa is different from the Western concept of masculinity. In the majority of Latino dance studies in the US context, Latin movement is considered more “primitive,” as stereotype of blackness, and therefore more feminine. This relates to the racial politics in the US context. Also, there is an impression of man dancing the Latino dance as to be gay. These are the stereotype of race. For more reference, please see my article “Leader-Follower—Throwing Out Gender Rules in Taiwanese Salsa Today.”

me to find any cultural reference of how to attract women. But in salsa, I am able to gain masculinity; I am able to “take her.” I am confident, graceful, and sexy. Salsa provides me with an alternative solution to be a man.”⁴⁸ Here we can see that in the US, salsa follows the conventional masculinity and femininity.⁴⁹

Next, in the traditional conception of gender role assignments for pair dancing, the woman is typically conceptualized as a passive follower. However, in order for the dance to go smoothly and successfully, there has to be clear bilateral communication between the man and the woman, such as being able to interpret changes in pressure, position, and weight that signal a change in the movement and the direction of the dance. Female dancers are able to communicate their willingness to do certain movements such as the number of turns, their willingness to do solo dance via the points of contact. The male dancers are receptive to this, and the expectation is to comply with female dancer’s intentions. If he ignores her intentions, the consequences will be social: no one wants to dance with him any more. By doing so, there is a balanced flow between leaders and followers, especially in cases where there is close physical contact.

These qualities of salsa have contributed to its fast adoption in Taiwan where it has been adapted to emphasize mutual respect between the partners and enjoyment rather than showy acrobatic moves. This is very different from the salsa style in Los Angeles, which is a male-directed form and has developed into a much more staged performance full of flashy and showy “tricks,” such as lifts, dips, turns. In Taiwan it is considered proper etiquette for male dancers to be sensitive to their partner’s skill level and not execute technically difficult and

⁴⁸ This interview was done in Taipei on July 1, 2012.

⁴⁹ For more reference in how Asian negotiate their sexuality in the practice salsa in the US, please see my article “Asian American Choreographies in Los Angeles Salsa Clubs.” (Chang, 2012)

forceful movements such as lifts or dips excessively. In fact, that kind of spectacle is rarely seen at all. Since there is less pressure to perform flashy movements, women are not as heavily controlled by men as in LA salsa scenes. Therefore, they are able to more actively participate in the flow process. In the Taiwanese salsa scene, it is generally expected there will be mutual agreement on the flow, and if the male dancer detects the female dancer's wishes to go in a certain direction, generally the male dancer will yield in order to preserve the harmony of the flow.

Lastly, salsa allows Taiwanese women to perform an active sexiness without being objectified by the male gaze. This is especially true in the Taiwanese context because men's sexual desires are conventionally directed toward vulnerable, non-threatening, passive, and childlike women. This form of sexual gaze can be seen in Japanese pornographic films, which are the most popular version of porn movie in Taiwan (Chen, 2008).⁵⁰ In contrast to the comparatively more active female roles in the European and North American adult films, the actresses in these Japanese adult films are mostly passive. These films, in which women are objectified and enslaved, reflect the idea within Japanese culture that men are superior to women (Tsai, 2014). Here I want to emphasize that traditional Taiwanese men find active, sexually demonstrative women threatening, not desirable. This unique feature in Taiwanese culture allows salsa to be a strategic resistance for female practitioners to play with the idea of claiming the authorship of their own erotic imagining.

As discussed earlier, while being cute alongside Confucian bodily discipline is currently the right way to perform femininity in Taiwan, salsa offers an alternate avenue to counter the

⁵⁰ According to a research survey, 93.5% of the respondents in Taiwan prefer to watch Japanese adult movies while only 22.8% would watch the Western (European and North American white female) porn (Chen, 2008). Although there might be racial and postcolonial factors involved in Taiwanese men's lack of interest in watching white actresses in adult films, here I focus on Taiwanese men's sexual preferences toward nonthreatening women as a cultural background to explain how salsa is a form of resistance for Taiwanese female practitioners.

dominant norm in Taiwan. If being cute is performing being the object of the desire, I suggest that being sexy for Taiwanese women is performing having the authorship of desire. By performing sexiness in Taiwan, women are not the objects of the gaze. Instead, she is creating her own erotic imaginary. She is the author of her own desire.

In “The Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power,” Audre Lorde argues that the freedom to exert one’s inner erotic energy could ensure a woman’s emotional and sexual satisfaction, and thereby enhance her creative energy at work and other aspects of her life. Lorde points out that women have the capacity to differentiate lust from eroticism. Lust, according to Lorde, is the objectification and utilization of a person’s body to please someone else. Objectification provides a lens to understand how women’s bodies serve a function for men within the patriarchal society. In contrast, eroticism is the sharing of one’s erotic energy and experience without being judged by others (Lorde,1984). Since this erotic desire is part of every women’s inner self, the denial of a woman’s free will to express her sexuality is equivalent to the denial of an essential aspect of her humanity (Lorde,1984). The gender inequality in a patriarchal society represses and fails to acknowledge a woman’s need for erotic desire and projects erotic desire onto men. Instead of the conservative norm of viewing women’s bodies as passive objects to fulfill men’s sexual needs, women should have the right to reclaim their bodies and erotic desires.

Salsa in Taiwan allows for a reclamation of female eroticism. Female Taiwanese salsa practitioners play with the idea of a performed sexiness to express their inner erotic energy and empower themselves. The sexy character in salsa is very different from cuteness practiced in Taiwan because these women in salsa dance are aggressively, not passively, sexy. In addition, the ways female salsa practitioners are perceived in Taiwan are very different from those in Los Angeles. In Taiwan, when I dance salsa with a performed erotic confidence

and sexiness, I frequently encounter male dancers who are a little bit surprised, intimidated, and shy when interacting with me. Whereas in Los Angeles, while dancing with the same styling, I am frequently treated as if I am interested in “exploring intimacy” off the dance floor. This may also be due to the fact that LA salsa style is a male-directed form, in which men manipulate and move women through space. I feel much more empowered in dancing salsa in Taiwan, as I am in control of what kind of erotic expression and what kind of responses I can manage to offer and receive. Because female salsa dancers are perceived as threatening, powerful, and sexually aggressive by a Taiwanese standard, Taiwanese men do not subject these female dancers to a desiring gaze. Therefore, salsa allows Taiwanese women to have the agency to enact, impose, and act out their own sexual desire without being viewed as sex objects.

Taiwanese salsa practitioners are not the only one who use salsa as a strategic local resistance. In the case study of salsa in Montreal Canada, Sheenagh Pietrobruno (2006) points out an interesting observation of how Montreal men and women are attracted by salsa’s performance of clear gender roles. According to Pietrobruno, Montrealers are more willing to engage in these socially inappropriate relationships in what is considered a “foreign” cultural practice to enjoy the pleasures of the male-female power play without questioning its sexist implications. Here we can see that salsa allows men and women to practice the old style gender interactions as a resistance to a gender equal society in Canada. While dancers resist the traditional Confucian norms in Taiwan, dancers resist by returning to earlier norms in Canada. Practicing foreign dance forms enables the person to put on “a mask,” but once they take the mask off, they resume normal life again without threatening their original social identity (Osumare 2008).

Salsa dance in Taiwan suggests a similar “masking” as an imagined other. In Taiwanese

context, salsa is exoticizing as well as empowering. Although Latin dance is also disciplined, salsa appears to be, and often is experienced as, an erotically charged dance style, and thereby offers Taiwanese practitioners the opportunity to temporarily and strategically embrace of an exotic sexuality. On the one hand, salsa dancing enables Taiwanese salsa practitioners to embody an imagined Latin body, on the other hand, it also allows these practitioners to push back against a standard Taiwanese bodily disciplined by the Confucian and cute tradition. Taiwanese practitioners can make a twist to their original, socially constructed identity, but this twist does not threaten their permanent one. It's a "don't-rock-the-boat" kind of resistance, and it is useful for Taiwanese people who are in a precarious position.

In Taiwan, not only do female salsa practitioners gain agency and assert their power to challenge traditional values, but male salsa practitioners also find a space to perform femininity and to enjoy their embodiment of the female role. There are sometimes male-male salsa couples. The continuity of the dance is done by two dancer partners who constantly exchange the leader and follower's moves. These male dancers can easily switch the leader-follower roles without difficulty and display their mastery in exchanging leader-follower moves in public without fear of being considered gay (as it might be in the US). In fact, it is not unusual for other people to form a crowd around them to watch and encourage them with clapping. There is a queering of gender in the switching of leader-follower roles in the same-sex couple dancing. These male dancers take turns expressing the feminine style of sexiness found in the lady styling of their follower's moves. They explore their feminine movement qualities safely in a public space by dancing salsa. These same sex dancers

demonstrate how the leaders and followers roles are not fixed and can be challenged.



FIGURE 2.2. Male-male dance couples in Taiwanese Salsa. Photo by I-Wen Chang.

However, rarely are women seen dancing with women. Same-sex dance couples are a privilege almost exclusively for male dancers. In this sense, salsa allows the male, but not female, dancers in Taiwan to transgress heterosexual normativity. They exercise their power and are able to inhabit the femininity in the practice of salsa. They are gambling their masculinity by being feminine in public while at the same time showing their well trained dance techniques as being able to switch between leader and follower. They are so "brave" to dance together in public and people look at them and admire them. The existence of these male-male dance couples at the exclusion of same-sex female dance couples actually reinforces the patriarchy by claiming gender latitude as a form of male power in male-dominated public space. But it is still interesting because it tends to be the opposite in the US.

The Modern Body: The Influence of Japanese Colonialism

Taiwanese has been influenced by the Chinese and Confucian bodily discipline.

However, in 1895, after their failure in the first Sino-Japanese War,⁵¹ Qing dynasty China declared its cession of Taiwan to Japan. Since then, Taiwan entered fifty years of Japanese rule from 1895 to 1945. Japanese rulers sought to assimilate the Taiwanese through language and cultural education, in order to “de-Sinicize” and Japanize the Taiwanese. In this section, I examine the modern body that was introduced during the Japanese colonization era. By modern body, I mean the new habitus that was brought by the Japanese colonizers to replace the traditional Chinese and Confucian influenced body. I examine specifically the modern body as the mainstream body in contrast to the previously dominant Chinese body.

In Japan, modernity and Westernization was brought during the Meiji Restoration (1868 to 1912).⁵² This movement does not only allow for the emergence of Japan as a modernized nation in the early twentieth century in both political and social structure, it also brings the most new Western culture and knowledge to Japanese. Before the end of WWII, Japan, as a colonizer for the rest of Asian countries, became the modern cultural center. Japan embraced Western modernity, and it became an empire afterward.

The encounter with Western modernity was, for Taiwan, mediated through Japanese colonization. During the Japanese colonization era in Taiwan (1895-1945), the Japanese government brought modernization to Taiwan through institutionalization, education and physical training. Taiwanese modernity were commonly experienced as colonial modernity

⁵¹ The First Sino-Japanese War (1 August 1894 – 17 April 1895) was a war between Qing dynasty China and Meiji Japan. The war clearly shows that the Qing dynasty's attempts to modernize its military failed. China lost its port of Weihai, and the Qing leadership sued for peace in February 1895.

⁵² The Meiji Restoration was a chain of events that restored practical imperial rule to Japan in 1868 under Emperor Meiji. The Meiji Restoration accelerated industrialization, modernization, and Westernization in Japan to become a modern world power.

and belated modernity, as Taiwanese industrial and capitalist development were advocated by the Japanese colonial government in Taiwan since 1895 (Sang, 2012: 65-66). This colonial modernity is a condition originated from Europe and subsequently spread as part of Europe's imperialist expansion. Therefore, there is an ambiguity of colonial modernity in Taiwan because the formation of modernity was developed during the colonial periods. That is, the modernity in Taiwan is not static in comparison to the West, but is formed through multiple influences.

The "Dōka" (同化, Tóngghuà, literally "assimilation") policy era (1919-1936) was a time credited with introducing modernity into Taiwan. It was a time where Taiwan would be viewed as an extension of Japan, and the Taiwanese would be educated to understand their roles and responsibilities as Japanese. During this period, the Japanese government allowed the Taiwanese relative freedom to innovate culturally. It marked a time when new Western technology and products, such as tap water, chocolate, watches, phones, cars, department stores, toothpaste, and tooth brushes, as well as new concepts such as social dance and freedom of choice in marriage were introduced to Taiwanese from Japan (Chen, 2005). The Japanese government tried to indoctrinate the Taiwanese to "become" Japanese, while at the same time leaving native Taiwanese and Chinese culture in place.⁵³ The Japanese government engaged in policies aimed at "civilizing" the Taiwanese people by way of indoctrination into Japanese culture. A relatively liberal accessibility of Taiwanese civilian control was allowed by the Japanese government. This reflected changes in the socio-political atmosphere in Taiwan at this moment.

The modernization brought capitalist expansion and this new economic hierarchy

⁵³ It was a time when the perception of colonialism in the West gave rise to growing waves of nationalism amongst colonial natives due to the end of World War I. Therefore, colonial governments all over the world became slowly liberalized and made concessions to populations they colonized.

refashioned the colonial racial hierarchy (Chen, 2004: 52). The two main purposes were to facilitate the colonizer's economic advantage over the local labor, and to construct a "civilized," modern Taiwanese body so that the colonized population could be as equally "civilized" as the modern Japanese. The Japanese took economic advantage of the Taiwanese by using their labor and taking nature resources from Taiwan. However, at the same time, Taiwanese were educated by the Japanese to be loyal to the colonial nationality as being a Japanese means to be superior, modern, and civilized.

A modern body was therefore introduced to Taiwan through this specific Japanese colonial influence to against the previously trained Chinese and Confucian body. During Japan's occupation of Taiwan, the colonial government paid clear attention to the health of the Taiwanese for the purpose of improving the national body⁵⁴. For example, in 1916, forms of physical culture, such as gymnastics, were introduced to the Taiwanese education system in order to train the modern citizens' bodies (Fan, 2001: 89).⁵⁵ Physical culture is a movement training system that originated during the 19th century in Germany. This particular exercise system was often promoted in accordance with nationalistic loyalties. The ultimate goal of physical training in Taiwan was to allow Taiwanese to reform their bodies to run, walk, and jump efficiently, and thus become healthy citizens and labors of Japan.

However, even though women's education began in 1897 in Taiwan, it was not until the Japanese banned the Chinese foot binding tradition did the majority Han ethnically Chinese

⁵⁴ The Japanese government carefully conducted medical inspections and physical examinations for both Taiwanese locals and the Japanese who immigrate to Taiwan. In 1915, there was a large scale physical examinations were widespread throughout Taiwan.

⁵⁵ This gymnastic training requires a huge amount of repetition, emphasizing "position and posture." This focus indicates the training of discipline (Hsieh, 2004:281).

women practice more intense physical training such as gymnastics (Chin, 2012).⁵⁶ Foot binding was a custom from China, practiced in Taiwan, of applying painfully tight binding to the feet of young girls to prevent further growth.⁵⁷ In order to strengthen the spirit and physiques of the Taiwanese to be modern civilized Japanese citizens, the Japanese government prohibited foot binding tradition in 1915 to support improved physical condition for women. These Taiwanese women who escape the food binding tradition had more freedom and more physical flexibility than ever before.

There is an ambiguity to how colonial modernity works in that it regulates women at the same time as liberating them. Ironically, while disciplining the Taiwanese body to be more productive for the colonial and economical purpose, this new rule also liberated women's ability to move their bodies. These Taiwanese women were allowed to work as nurses, factory workers, entertainers, dancers, and bus ticket inspectors (Ong: 2010). This productive, modern Taiwanese body was constructed to replace the Confucian body and to serve the colonizer's economic demands. It also offered limited agency for Taiwanese women in this modern era, which I will emphasize in the following section.

The Social Dance Body versus the Modern Body

⁵⁶ Han Chinese ethnicity counts for 97.7% of Taiwanese population at that time. See Chen, Shaoxin (陳紹馨). 1979. *Taiwan de ren kou bian qian yu she hui bian qian* (台灣的人口變遷與社會變遷, the changing of population in Taiwan) , Taipei: Lian jing. p 96-98.

⁵⁷ Foot binding is a custom that existed prior to the court of the Southern Tang dynasty (937–976). In the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368), the term “three-inch lotus (三寸金蓮)” was invented to describe the beauty of women's small foot. In the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), all girls, no matter rich or poor, were expected to have their feet bound. This custom of foot binding among Han Chinese in Taiwan originated in Fujian Province in China. The practice of foot binding was as prevalent in Taiwan as in China. The percentage of foot binding among female Taiwanese students decreased from 90% in 1905 to 28% in 1914. (Chin, 2012)

阮是文明女
東西南北自由志
逍遙伶自在
世事如何阮不知
阮只知文明時代
社交愛公開
男女雙雙
排做一排
跳狐步舞我上蓋愛

--- 【跳舞時代 *Viva Tonal*】 歌詞

*I am a cultured woman.
Traveling freely about footloose and fancy-free
I'm happy to be on my own
I'm not up on the affairs of the world
I only know that in the age of civilization
Social life should be open
Couples together
Cued in lines
I'm a fool for the foxtrot*
--Music lyric of "The Dance Age" from
the movie "Viva Tonal: The Dance Age"

This lyric, as written and sung in Taiwanese,⁵⁸ describes how a civilized woman can travel freely and be happy on her own. Her social life should be open and liberated. She has neither cares nor troubles, and the fox-trotting life is here for her. This music, along with the footage of Taiwanese women in Western 1930s style dress walking in parks, rowing boats, smoking cigarettes, and dancing to music played on phonographs, is a scene from a 2003 documentary film called *Viva Tonal: The Dance Age* (跳舞時代, 2003. *Tiaowu shidai*).⁵⁹

Viva Tonal: The Dance Age traces the dissemination of popular dance music and song from Japan to colonial Taiwan in the 1930s. It depicts a time when new acoustics and phonographic sound reproduction technology emerged from the recording industry, especially with a focus on the music history of the Nippon Columbia Records company in Taiwan.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Taiwanese is a variant of Hokkien spoken by about 70% of the population of Taiwan. The largest linguistic group in Taiwan, in which Hokkien is considered a native language, is known as Hoklo. In contrast to Mandarin Chinese, Taiwanese is considered a "mother tongue" for local Taiwanese. Until the 1980s, the use of Taiwanese, along with all dialects other than Mandarin, was discouraged by the KMT government. This policy was removed by the 1990s. Taiwanese becomes an emblem of localization and indicates the extreme spirit of Taiwanese independence.

⁵⁹ This 16 mm, 104 minute long documentary film includes rare footage shot in the colonial period and was made by Chien Wei-ssu (簡偉斯) and Kuo Chen-ti (郭貞弟); the film won the "best documentary" award for the 2003 Golden Horse Award. By interviewing several singers, composers, and collectors in Taiwan, this documentary offers a nuanced and sensible interpretive account of Taiwanese cultural history during the Japanese colonial era.

⁶⁰ Nippon Columbia Co., Ltd. is a Japanese record label founded in 1910. It affiliated itself with the Columbia Graphophone Company of the United Kingdom and adopted the standard UK Columbia trademarks in 1931. It launched its business in Taiwan since the late 20s till 1945 (the end of World War Two), and promoted several important and local style Taiwanese lyrics music and singers.

Music contains social meanings that reveal local and global cultural coding during this early modern era in Taiwan, and thus worth a discussion.



FIGURE 2.3. Dance music gramophone record cover during the Japanese colonial era. Courtesy to the collector Li Kuncheng (李坤城). Photo by I-Wen Chang.

The dance music lyric of “The Dance Age”, as shown in the movie *Viva Tonal: The Dance Age*, was a new fusion that illustrated Taiwan as a new urban culture center at that time. This music lyric included Taiwanese-language lyrics set to Western and Japanese inspired dance music and resulted in a music with Taiwanese folk element, such as Taiwanese opera singing styles. The author of this lyric, Chen Junyu (陳君玉),⁶¹ tried to preserve Taiwanese cultural subjectivity by embracing traditional culture to fit the new music style. Later this song was exported to South East Asia and gained popularity (Chen, 2004: 65-68). This showed that modernity in Taiwan was a complicated concept from transnational cultural

⁶¹ Chen Junyu (1906-1963) born in Taiwan and went to Qingdao in mainland China during his teens. He witnessed the May Fourth Movement, an anti-imperialist, cultural, and political modernist movement in China in 1919. He came to realize the modernizing ideas such as cultural enlightenment and national self-determination. Chen went back to Taiwan and worked for the Nippon Columbia Records in 1933. This gave him a chance to be the main lyricist of the first Taiwanese-language popular songs. However, he quit this job just one year after to devote himself to his co-founded journal to popularize literature and arts. As most of his written poetry was written in Taiwanese dialect rather than Mandarin, we can see that he has an assertion of a particular Taiwanese cultural subjectivity (Sang, 2012: 73-75).

traffic beyond local resources and Japanese colonialism (Sang, 2012: 65-66, 72). Colonial modernity paradoxically enabled a unique Taiwanese urban culture that combines both the Western and Japanese influence but creates a unique Taiwanese identification in East Asia. Thus the music in Taiwan complicated the stereotype of Japan as the modernizing agent and the Taiwanese as passive recipients for Japanese colonization.



FIGURE 2.4. The gramophone record of the original music “*Viva Tonal*” and other dance orchestra in the 1930s. Courtesy to the collector Li Kuncheng. Photo by I-Wen Chang.

It is important to look at social dance as both bending the rules and facilitating the modern body in the colonial world. Learning how to dance is a civilizing process that teaches people how to behave with proper modern and Western manners. It is also a safe way to manage and regulate the use of the body. In Japan, partner dance was introduced as a cultural symbol and Western manner around Meiji year twelve (1879). The opening of Rokumeikan (鹿鳴館, literary means “Deer-blare Hall”) in Tokyo in 1883 symbolized a highlight for Westernization in the Meiji period. It was commissioned by the Foreign Minister in Japan for the housing of foreign guests and became famous for hosting glamorous and luxurious parties and balls. The Rokumeikan served luxurious banquets, with menus written in French. On the dance floor, Japanese gentlemen dressed in imported London-tailored evening dress;

Japanese ladies dressed in the latest Parisian fashions. They danced the waltz, polka, quadrille, and mazurka to the latest European songs. Foreign residents of Tokyo were hired as dancing tutors (Keene, 2005: 391-395). These parties introduced many high-ranking Japanese to Western manners. Only the guests of the government, and those who had already lived abroad were able to attend those social events (Ishii, 1926). Here we can see that partner dance practice was political tool in the Japanese modernization. Rokumeikan was made to impress Western and Japanese elite visitors by creating an extreme Westernized social atmosphere. Therefore, Japanese diplomats and foreign dignitaries alike could feel themselves as cultural equals. In this way, the Japanese government would be regarded as equal in terms of “civilization” as compared to Europeans. For the Japanese, these manners facilitated renegotiation of the Unequal Treaties and would symbolize Japan as an equal in the ranks of the imperial powers (Hane, 1990: 116).

In Taiwan, with the introduction of the recording industry, Western style popular music and social dances also emerged. As early as in 1927 (during the "Dōka" policy era), an elite named Lin Shu-zhi (林樹枝) who studied in Japan,⁶² learned partner dance in Japan, and later invited his dancer teacher to teach in Taiwan. During the 1930s, this dancing phenomenon became more and more popular. In the *Taiwan Daily News*, there were several news reports on various dance halls being requested to open in both Taipei and Kaohsiung, and were rejected due to no clear legal regulation in 1930.⁶³ It was not until 1931 when the first two dance clubs in Taiwan were finally legally launched.

Simultaneous Sound Club (同聲俱樂部) and Plumage Dance Hall (羽衣會館), the first

⁶² Lin Shu-zhi is from the Banqiao (板橋) Lin Family. The Banqiao Lin Family is a Taiwanese family of businesspeople, politicians, and scholars. They originated from Banqiao, Taipei during the Qing Dynasty and are still active in contemporary Taiwan.

⁶³*Taiwan Daily News* (台灣日日新報), 10/7/ 1930 (8); 10/04/1930 (4); 10/22/1930 (4).



FIGURE 2.5. The advertisement of the opening date and entrance fee of the Plumage Dance Hall, in the cover story of *Taiwan Daily News* on November, 3, 1932.

two dance halls in Taiwan were described in the popular music lyric at that time. For example, the music lyric from “Taipei Bamboo Poetry (臺北竹枝詞)” that was written by Li Teng-yue (李騰嶽) vividly depicts the popularity in these two famous dance clubs in 1932:

Today we go to the Simultaneous Sound Club, while last night we were in the Plumage Dance Hall; in the blurring lights, we dance as if we were a pair of lovebirds flying around the dance hall (今日同聲昨羽衣，舞腰輕抱合鮮肥；迷離舞色燈光下，共效翩翩比翼飛).

The opening of those dance clubs was a huge event at that time. The mainstream newspaper at that time, *Taiwan Daily News*, reported the opening of the Japanese-run Plumage Dance Hall on the cover page. In order to prepare for the opening of the Plumage Dance Hall, the Japanese owner brought twelve dance instructors and dancers from Japan;



FIGURE 2.6. (Left) The advertisements of Simultaneous Sound Club in *Taiwan Daily News* on November, 11, 1932, and (Right) Plumage Dance Hall in *Taiwan Daily News* on October, 18, 1932.



FIGURE 2.7. (Left) Japanese dancers traveled to Taiwan to work as Plumage Dance Hall dancers. (*Taiwan Daily News*, November, 2, 1932). (Right) The opening ceremony of Plumage Dance Hall in *Taiwan Daily News* on November, 4, 1932.

these dancers were treated as stars.⁶⁴ On the opening date (11/3/1932), there were about five hundreds guests attending (Takenaka, 2009). Moreover, due to the financial benefits, there

⁶⁴*Taiwan Daily News* (台灣日日新報), 11/3/1932, cover page.

were even criminals that fabricated and sold two thousand fake entrance tickets.⁶⁵ These showed the popularity of partner social dance at that moment.

This popularity of partner dance, however, was only shared among cultural and political elites. For example, simultaneous Sound Club was operated by several Taiwanese elites, including doctors, businessman, and scholars (Chen, 2011: 152). It was also expensive to attend. For example, in addition to pay the tuition to learn dance, guests had to pay entry fees to attend the dance club, and pay for the dancers to dance with. Only the guests who could dress well and arrive by car were allowed to attend these social dance events. However, while these social dance events were exclusive to elites, this new dance activity also allowed the non-elite women to participate the modern life in Taiwan at that time. As previously discussed, only elite women had the ability to attend school as part of the modern culture formation. However, non-elite women, who worked as singers and dancers (who dance with men) in dance halls, were able to participate in modern culture formations in Taiwan through social dance⁶⁶. They had limited agency to be part of this new modern world, as described in these music lyrics and poems:

毛斷台北現代女，十字路頭來相遇，
行路親像在跳舞！跳舞！跳舞！
活潑無人有，萬種流行擺會副咖啡館五
燈，
窗前女給（女服務生）在歡迎，
吃酒服務談愛情！愛情！愛情！
（1934, “新台北行進曲” 歌詞）

*Modern Taipei girls meet at the cross road.
They walk as if they are dancing, dancing,
and dancing.
They are so active, beyond anyone else.
These women are fashionable, they are
attending coffee shops.
They can work as independent female
servers. They drink while they talk.
They enjoy their love lives.
Love, Love, and Love.
(music lyrics from “New Taipei March.”)*

⁶⁵Taiwan Daily News (台灣日日新報), 04/08/1934 (8)

⁶⁶ Historian Kathy Peiss and Valerie Matsumoto have also discuss about the similar women’s situation in the US.

毛斷台北現代女，十字路頭來相遇，
行路親像在跳舞！跳舞！跳舞！
活潑無人有，萬種流行擺會副咖啡館五
燈，
窗前女給（女服務生）在歡迎，
吃酒服務談愛情！愛情！愛情！
（1934, “新台北行進曲” 歌詞）

*Modern Taipei girls meet at the cross road.
They walk as if they are dancing, dancing,
and dancing.
They are so active, beyond anyone else.
These women are fashionable, they are
attending coffee shops.
They can work as independent female
servers. They drink while they talk.
They enjoy their love lives.
Love, Love, and Love.
(music lyrics from “New Taipei March,”
1934)*

廿紀摩登女。
風流燦一堂。
蹁躑相握手。
窈窕共偎香。
樂奏隨人轉。
聲喧引客狂。
(Chang, 〈跳舞女〉 1936:20)

*Charming modern women in the Twenties
century.
They are spinning and dancing in the dance
hall. When they make turns next to each
other, there is a nice aroma smell spreading
around.
Music continues with their dance steps and
the sound of music makes everyone crazy.
(Poem from “Dancing Women”, 1936:20)*

As the lyric from “New Taipei March” illustrated, there were new jobs emerging, including dancer and coffee shop servers,⁶⁷ which allowed women to work independently. Therefore, dancing was connected with the liberation of a new image of a modern woman who embraced the contemporary culture and the new concept of love and liberation. Dance offered a space for participants to engage with modern culture and contribute to the understanding of class mobility in colonial modernity; however, this agency for women to be independent individuals as dancers may be limited.

⁶⁷ Female coffee shop servers (珈琲店女給) was a new career for women during the 1930s in Taiwan. It was considered fashionable because coffee shops were a new modern idea in Taiwan. These coffee shops offer wine, drinks, and food, and sometimes even offer space for events such as exhibitions and lectures for cultural elites. Female coffee shop servers worked solely on tips. They were famous for being sociable and beautiful, and talented in arts and literature to attract guests. Even the government had invited them as ambassadors for government decree (Liao, 2012).

體態任風飄。
如癡帶撒嬌。
蛾眉誇捷足。
粉黛弄纖腰。
雀躍身頻動。
燕飛掌輒搖。
郎君真得意。
攜手欲魂銷。
(Wu, 〈跳舞女〉 1931: 14)

She is as skinny as the wind could easily move her away. She acts like a cute spoiled child. Her eyebrow and make up are beautiful. She has such a nice tiny waist and can moves her steps so quickly and delicately. When she dances in the air, she is as light as a bird. Being her dance partner is such a satisfying experience. You can hold her hands and you are willing to die without hesitant because you have already enjoy this pleasant movement.
(Wu, *Dancing Women*, 1931: 14)

座上妙齡女。
輕盈體態嬌。
挺身連足蹴。
舞手並頭搖。
衣袖隨風轉。
裙裾等雪飄。
(Zhou, 〈跳舞女〉 1931: 14)

This young dancer has a light and feminine body shape. She stands up and dances with her hand and head moving. Her sleeve is turning with the wind blowing, and her skirts floats like a snow falling on the ground.
(Zhou, *Dancing Women*, 1931: 14)

The illustration of detailed female bodies in these two poems suggested that while dance can offer liberation and modern manners for Taiwanese female dance practitioners, female bodies were still consumed and displayed for the male gaze. Dancing women were often judged as subject to temptation and moral degradation. For example, in 1927, *Taiwan Daily News* (台灣日日新報) posted a critique about this new social event: “When dancing, the natural impulse occurred. These innocent girls are easily tempted. They might end up miserable as ‘a false step may cause a lifelong regret.’” (跳來跳去之間。生出本能衝動。無垢少女。受人誘惑。有一失足而成千古恨之陷於悲境也).⁶⁸ Here we can see that modern dance halls suggested two different features: liberation and ethical controversy. Partner dance ambiguously contained two meanings: modern (liberal), and immoral (against

⁶⁸ *Taiwan Daily News* (台灣日日新報), 11/28/1927 (4).

traditional values).

The singer Chunchun (純純), who sang “The Dance Age” in *Viva Tonal*, had a tragic life that may illustrate a modern woman’s struggle with these two opposite meanings in modern life. Although she grew up poor, she was able to perform, sing, and participate in the formation of early Taiwanese modern culture as a high earning popular singer. While singing songs about free love and dancing, Chunchun fell in love with a university student who was educated in Japan. Due to her background, Chunchun was not accepted by her lover’s family. This struggle between modernity (free choice in love) and tradition (arranged marriage between people of similar class background) highlighted the fact that class mobility through capitalism had its limits (Sang, 2012: 78). Chunchun later married a Japanese businessman, maybe hoping to advance to a different class. But she died at the young age of twenty nine from tuberculosis she contracted from her husband.

With the onset of the Sino-Japanese war (1937) and the outbreak of the Pacific War (1941), the Second World War became more and more intense in East Asia. Both Taiwanese and Japanese societies entered the military ruling era. This era (1937-1945) was the "Kōminka movement" (皇民化運動, kōminka undō, literally “imperialization”) era in Taiwan - aimed at fully transforming the Taiwanese into Japanese and building "Japanese spirit" (大和魂, Yamatodamashī), so that the Taiwanese with the Japanese identity can serve as royal soldiers for Japan during the World War II (Huang, 2005). Cultural spaces for dance were largely diminished once Japan lunged itself into an all-out war in the Pacific and militarized Taiwan. As a result, social partner dance was banned during the 1940s (Jitian, 2002: 203). The fact that war policies impacted dance practice shows that political contests influenced the everyday practice of social dance. Although social dances in Taiwan may have

brought a new bodily discipline that allowed some women to embrace Westernization, moderation, and liberation in the 30s, this dance practice also engaged closely with the ongoing nationalist politics.

The Combative and National Body: *Minzu Wudao* and *Tufeng Wu*

Dance forms in Taiwan are intimately connected to Taiwanese nationalism. After the end of the World War Two, dance forms in Taiwan emerged out of a period of national panic over losing control over mainland China. The nature of state political discourse is to always articulate the national body in order to recreate this body's own significance as a political voice. This section examines the combative and national body that was introduced in Taiwan to serve for political and nationalist purposes by KMT (Kuomintang of China, the Chinese Nationalist Party) after the Second World War.

In October 1945, Taiwan was formally returned to China, ending fifty years of Japanese occupation. The end of World War II did not bring peace to Taiwan for long: the ongoing Chinese civil war resulted in a different fate for Taiwan. In 1949, the newly founded communist People's Republic of China controlled mainland China, and the KMT-led Republic of China restricted Taiwan. The government promulgated the "Order of Martial Law" to announce the imposition of Taiwan martial Law in 1949, and started its authoritarian rule in Taiwan.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ In the year 1949, a series of Martial Law relevant regulations were set up by the KMT government, including the Regulations to prevent unlawful assembly, association, procession, petition, strike under Martial Law (戒嚴期間防止非法集會結社遊行請願罷課罷工罷市罷業等規定實施辦法), the Measures to regulate newspapers, magazines and book publication under the Martial Law (戒嚴期間新聞雜誌圖書管理辦法), and the Regulations for the punishment of rebellions (懲治叛亂條例). It was prohibited to formulate new political parties, and there was a strict political censorship among almost everything. The Martial Law was lifted in 1987. However, Taiwan had been under the Martial Law for more than 38 years, and this has a huge impact on the Taiwanese society even till today.

After losing its power in mainland China and retreating to Taiwan, the KMT still aimed to present itself as the sole and legitimate representative of 'China' in the geopolitical world. The KMT leadership proclaimed it had lost the mainland through failure of morale and through the negligence of the power of the arts and the incompetence in ideological warfare. Therefore, the KMT government decided to reconstruct its ideology through its cultural policy. While communist China attempted to break the old traditional rules in arts, religions, and rituals, KMT government claimed to continue legitimating itself as the authentic China representative and proclaimed Chinese renaissance to be its duty.

The building of a combative, national body was established with this political situation as its background. As the regime consolidated its rules in Taiwan, two measures constituted the main concerns of its cultural policy: first, government censorship and second, the state-sponsored cultural programs initiated in the 1950s (Chen, 2003:38-39). The latter policy resulted in the founding of all sorts of cultural organizations. The KMT government started to organize several national Chinese folkdance contests. Numerous cultural movements were inaugurated to promote the official policy of disseminating anti-Communist doctrine, thus positioning the KMT government as the sole, legitimate Chinese government.

Under this circumstance, dance became a political tool for fulfilling the agenda of the nationalist authorities. Before the 1950s, early dance choreography focused on issues of ethnic identity struggle (Chinese vs. Japanese and colonial modernity); after the 1950s, choreographers emphasized political and ideological identity struggles (nationalist China vs. communist China). The birth of a particular stage of dance forms, *minzu wudao* (民族舞蹈, Chinese ethnic/folk dance) and the practice of *tufeng wu* (土風舞, international folkdance), testified to KMT's central state ideology through subjecting dance and the dancing body to

the nationalistic “authentic” Chinese body - a combative body.

Minzu Wudao: The Construction of a Chinese National Body

Mminzu wudao was part of a nostalgic imaginary to legitimate the idea of an “authentic China.” In 1952, the Ministry of Defense appointed General He Chih-hao (何志浩) to promote dance activities that help to train the body and entertain the soldiers. In the same year, president Chiang Kai-shek published *Amendment to the Chapters of “Education” and “Recreation” of People’s Livelihood* (民生主義育樂兩篇補述), in which he claimed both moral and ideological guidelines for the arts, and stated explicitly that the official art policy is to bolster national culture by promoting combative arts and literature. This article also stated that the training in body movements, such as in dance and sport, can foster mind/body balance. It emphasized that the strong citizen can construct a strong country. While this concept seemed similar to the Japanese modern body, this idea focused more on militaristic themes and training rather than its economic function. In response to the article, General He launched the *minzu wudao* propagation committee (民族舞蹈推行委員會) to complete the task of “uniting forces to build [the society into] a strong military unit...through the art of dance” (He, 1959: 17).

According to the *minzu wudao* propagation committee, there were four genres in dance: military dance (戰鬥舞), labor dance (勞動舞), courtesy dance (禮節舞), and gala dance (聯歡舞) (He, 1959: 6-7). These movement themes provided a guideline for training the citizen’s body to be able to engage in combat during war times, as well as providing discipline and manners in daily life. For the *minzu wudao* propagation committee, these dance themes responded to the government policy to transform dance into a healthy military activity, and

therefore increased citizens' enthusiasm for representing a powerful national spirit. All of these concepts were developed in response to Chiang's leading goal: dance and movement training exists to build a country that preserves "Chinese culture" in the fight against Communism.

From the 1950s to the 1980s, *minzu wudao* has become part of Taiwanese dance culture, including part of the curriculum in Taiwanese professional dance education. *Minzu wudao* competitions have had a huge impact on the Taiwanese dance field since the first national contest in 1954, in part because the choreographers who won would get more funding and attract more students. Schools who won dance competitions would get points of merit from the Ministry of Education (Chen, 2003).

During the 1950s, as the government promoted *minzu wudao*, numerous Taiwanese choreographers—who may have never been to China⁷⁰ — started to create imagined 'authentic' Chinese folkdances to support the government policy. For them, the criteria for choreographing a Chinese folkdance piece was creativity and imagination about what Chinese folkdance could look like. These choreographers used data from printed resources and suggestions from peers to create a national Chinese folk dance to fulfill the desire from KMT's core value. Many renowned Taiwanese choreographers who learned modern dance in the Japanese colonial era, such as Tsai Jui-yueh (蔡瑞月, 1921-2005), started to choreograph

⁷⁰ It was not until 1987 that the Taiwanese are allowed to travel to China.

Chinese folkdance style dance pieces.⁷¹ Tsai Jui-yueh was one of the most important first generation modern dancers and choreographers in Taiwan.⁷² Before World War Two, she gained Japanese-influenced modern dance skills and performed with Japanese companies during the 1940s. She also performed with Japanese early modern choreographer Ishii Baku's dance company in South East Asia during the Pacific War (1941), which propagated Japanese militarist and political ideology as part of the operation of the war machine (Chen, 2001: 24-25). Tsai returned to Taiwan after the World War II.

As a Japanese-trained modern dancer, Tsai choreographed the most famous *minzu wudao* piece called *Miao nu nung pei* (苗女弄杯, Miao ethnic women play with cups). This piece depicted a Miao ethnic woman dancing while holding cups in both of her hands. While other dancers moved around the major dancer, the cups on her hands collide with each other, making ringing sounds. Tsai was inspired by her student who claimed to know people "back home in China", who danced with cups (Tsai, 1998). She also referenced Chinese opera movements, such as ribbon dance, long-sleeve dance, and sword dance, in her pieces.

Interestingly, when the cross-strait relations were normalized in 1987,⁷³ many Taiwanese people traveled to China and realized that Miao ethnic people dance without holding cups in

⁷¹ Tsai did not totally switch her choreographic styles into Chinese folkdance, but she also choreographed several ballet, modern, and indigenous dance pieces (Tsai and Xiao, 1998). For example, Tsai's husband was arrested and exiled to China. Tsai was also incriminated to put in jail during the *White Terror* era in Taiwan. In the mean time (1949-1952), she still actively taught and choreographed dance pieces in jail. Ironically, she had also been arranged to perform for Chiang Kai-shek (who is responsible for exiling her husband and imprisoning her) and Chiang's international guests. After she was freed from prison, Tsai choreographed a piece called "puppet battle (傀儡上陣)" that illustrates her anger toward totalitarianism and the desire for freedom. In this piece, a female dancer dressed in traditional Chinese garments, moves as if she is a puppet manipulated by someone else. However, by the end of the piece she still shows the desire for depicting human emotions. Tsai had choreographed various styles of dance piece, and this may suggest that her Chinese folkdance choreography was part of her strategic plan to keep working as an artist in that specific social context.

⁷² In 1937, Tsai, as a single female, went to Japan alone to study dance at the age of sixteen. Her bravery and enthusiasm for studying dance abroad illustrates how liberated and independent a Taiwanese woman can be. Tsai studies in Ishii Baku School of Dance and Physical Education in Tokyo, where she studied ballet, eurhythmics, and creative dance.

⁷³ Cross-strait relations refers to the relations between the PRC in China and the ROC in Taiwan.



FIGURE 2.8. *Minzu wudao* folkdance competitions are still held in present day Taiwan. These two flyers are for the Mongolian and Tibetan Folk Dance competitions organized by the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission, a government ministry-level commission in Taiwan, in 2005 (left) and 2009 (right).

their hands.

Dance is often promoted as a weapon of ideological warfare. At the height of the Cold War in 1954, US President Dwight Eisenhower inaugurated a program of cultural exchange that sent American dancers and other artists to political “hot spots” overseas (Geduld, 2010; Prevots, 1998). Eisenhower’s program of cultural export also fitted Chiang’s anti-Communist dance policy. The US sent their dance companies to tour Asia, including Taiwan. At the same time, Taiwanese dance companies performed *minzu wudao*, including dances from various Chinese ethnic minority groups, and thus provided visual representations of Chinese characters at banquets for foreign officials and businessmen (Chen, 2003: 66), or toured around the world with KMT diplomats to express “authentic” Chinese culture at formal events. We can see that *minzu wudao* in Taiwan was utilized to represent Chinese culture and de-Japanese influence in Taiwan. *Minzu wudao* continued to play an important role in

educating Taiwanese people about their Chinese identity, and represented “authentic” Chinese culture when performing abroad.

Tufeng wu: The Combative Body and the Construction of an Imagined Self

In 1952, China Youth Anti-Communist National Salvation Corps (中國青年反共救國團, China Youth Corps, CYC) was founded on the recommendation of the president Chiang Kai-Shek, who served as its first chairperson. CYC was a quasi-governmental and quasi-political organization with close ties to the KMT regime. The purpose of the CYC was to provide military training through various recreational activities for youths before they joined the army. CYC offered the citizens a way to train their combative body through a range of activities, including dances and sports. It was one of the few organizations that offered recreational activities for youth citizens during the Martial Law period (1946-1987), and thus got great popularity among youth citizens in Taiwan.

In every popular CYC youth camp events or activities, the body was clearly manipulated through collective order, rules, discipline, and dignified manner instilled by a duty officer (值星官). A duty officer was in charge of time management, responsible for taking attendance, and gave orders such as “attention,” “be quick,” “all rise,” “salute,” and “bow” to participants (Huang, 2009). The physical discipline insured a combative body training that created a combative spirit. The youth’s bodies were strategically influenced by the carefully manipulated techniques of the body. Even now, this military-styled regime is still commonly practiced in cram schools⁷⁴ and student-run club events in Taiwan to keep everything in

⁷⁴ Cram schools are specialized schools that are popular in Asia. These schools train their students to pass the entrance examinations for universities or graduate schools. The training is normally military style in order to make the most efficient use of time.



FIGURE 2.9. The program cover of the first Asian *Tufeng Wu* festival hosted in Taipei in 1981.

order.

In 1957, Ricky Holden, a square and folk dance teacher, was sent from the United States Department of State to teach recreational international folk dancing in Taiwan (Li and Yu, 2005). This trip was arranged by the United States Information Service in Taiwan and hosted by CYC, indicating the government support from both the US and Taiwan. While most dance forms were prohibited for practice in public, *Tufeng wu* (international folkdance, 土風舞) was introduced by an American, and supported by the KMT government, making it the only officially support popular leisure physical activity that was available among Taiwanese citizens. *Tufeng wu* soon became a popular and permissible dance, accessible to ordinary Taiwanese people, such as students.

In the *tufeng wu* dance repertoire, dance pieces were from all over the world, including

Israel, Spain, Italy, Russia, Mexico, Hungary, Bulgaria, Poland, Japan, and China, to name a few (Yang, 1968). In a *tufeng wu* dance manual, it clearly stated the relationship between each of the folk dance movement styles, aesthetics, ethnicities, geographies, and local cultures, in order to educate the practitioners to embody and understand foreign cultures (Zeng, 2010). *Tufeng wu* brought the imagination of foreignness by dancing international folk dance. Although people under the Martial Law were not allowed to travel abroad, these *tufeng wu* practitioners “danced around the world” and got a sense of what other cultures may look like through international folkdance practice. *Tufeng wu* offered them an opportunity to world dance and dance the world through imagining.

The idea of *Tufeng wu* was widely accepted by the KMT government because it was considered useful to maintain a combative body in response to the CYC’s slogan “militarize physical education (體育國防化)” in 1952 (Lu, 1998). This dance practice can easily fit into one of the four dance genres that the *minzu wudao* propagation committee promoted: gala dance because its simple movement styles offered convenience for easy training for non dance majored professionals and students. As an accessible dance practice, it was also considered good to strengthen the national spirit, thereby reinforcing Chiang’s policy toward physical training (Chen, 1995). In the contexts of Martial Law in Taiwan, *Tufeng wu* gradually became part of the combative and national body training system.

The key figures in promoting *tufeng wu* in Taiwan, including Li Tienming (李天民), Yang Changxiong (楊昌雄), Chang Chingsan (張慶三), were all connected to physical education in Taiwan. For example, Li Tienming was a dance director in the National Junior College of the Arts and Female Youth Brigade under the Ministry of National Defense (國防



| 一月 JANUARY | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|------|---------------|------|---------------------|-----------|------|
| 星期日 | 星期一 | 星期二 | 星期三 | 星期四 | 星期五 | 星期六 |
| SUN. | MON. | TUES. | WED. | THU. | FRI. | SAT. |
| NOTES: 本月份舉辦70年冬令分區土風舞發表會 | | | | 1 農曆十一月廿六日 開國紀念日 | 2 | 3 |
| 4 | 5 | 6 農曆十二月初一日 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 11 司法節 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 藥師節 | 16 | 17 |
| 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 自由日 | 24 |
| 25 分區土風舞發表會 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |

FIGURE 2.10. The *Tufeng Wu* monthly calendar published in 1981. Each month comes with an introduction of a specific kind of folk dance around the world.

部女青年工作大隊).⁷⁵ Li led his students to perform *minzu wudao* globally with the KMT government (Chen, 2003: 66). In addition, Yang Changxiong and Chang Chingsan both graduated from the National Taiwan Normal University (the best university for preparing teachers for high schools in Taiwan). Both Young and Chang learned *tufeng wu* from Ricky Holden. With the support from CYC, YMCA Taipei, and Taiwanese education system, they were able to promote international folkdance practice in Taiwan.

From 1977-1978, the Ministry of Education in Taiwan started to promote *tufeng wu* as a national sport for all citizens, and organized workshops to train instructors to teach *tufeng wu* in schools in Taiwan (Chen, 1995). Since then, there have been numerous *tufeng wu* dance clubs established in Taiwanese universities. In the era when dancing was strictly regulated, *tufeng wu* offered the youth a legal chance to dance, and thus it became one of the most popular activities among young professionals and college students. During the 1970s to 1980s, *tufeng wu* was in its highest point of popularity. People danced *tufeng wu* in the square in Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall, and a large number of new original *tufeng wu* pieces were created every month by Taiwanese *tufeng wu* instructors.⁷⁶

Abroad, *tufeng wu* allowed Taiwanese performers to represent “authentic Chinese” tradition at international folkdance conferences mainly hosted in the US. In an interview with Yang Changxiong,⁷⁷ he describes that in 1970s, an era when high restrictions applied to traveling abroad under Martial Law, he got the invitation to teach folkdance in Singapore and the United Kingdom. Under the government censorship system, he was able to go abroad

⁷⁵ Female Youth Brigade under the Ministry of National Defense (國防部女青年工作大隊, 1949-2005) was established in 1949 under the Political Warfare Bureau, which is the affiliated authority of the Ministry of National Defense. These participating females were responsible for nursing, entertaining, psychological counseling, and performing cultural arts in the army.

⁷⁶ Based on my interview with Yang Chang-xiong on November, 22, 2013 in Taipei.

⁷⁷ Based on my interview with Yang Chang-xiong on November, 22, 2013 in Taipei.

because he was invited to teach “Chinese” dance. He also brought Chinese dance props and gifts, such as writing brushes, ink sticks, papers, fans, and inks with him to exhibit the “Chinese culture”.

Moreover, minority dance practices are often appropriated to serve the formation of a nation. While both Yang Changxiong and Chang Chingsan claimed to promote “Chinese folkdance” abroad, they also choreographed dance pieces that were inspired by Taiwanese local Culture. For example, *spring songs in the mountain* (山地春歌) and *tea-leaves dance* (採茶舞) were choreographed to teach foreigners about Taiwanese indigenous and Hakka⁷⁸ dance culture.⁷⁹ Interestingly, both indigenous and Hakka language were banned during the Martial Law because only the Mandarin Chinese was recognized as the official, legal, and national language. However, the appropriation of minority ethnic groups’ cultures in performance was allowed to present the multi-ethnicity of a greater “Republic of China”. The *minzu wudao* and *tufeng wu* phenomenon in Taiwan illustrates a history of how the combative and national bodies engaged with a political discourse in the Taiwanese society.

The Partner Dance Body versus the Combative and National Body

Under Martial Law, partner dance was strictly regulated due to the conservative moral position of the government. However, these restrictions, rules, and attitudes loosened gradually due to American influence. During the Vietnam War era, the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG), as US military advisers, were sent to other countries to assist the training of armed forces and facilitate military aid in South-East Asia. From 1951 to 1978,

⁷⁸ Hakka people comprise about 15 to 20% of the population of Taiwan and form the second-largest ethnic group on the island. They are descended largely from Hakka who migrated from southern and northern Guangdong to Taiwan around the end of the Ming dynasty and the beginning of the Qing dynasty (ca. 1644).

⁷⁹ Based on my interview with Yang Chang-xiong on November, 22, 2013 in Taipei.

MAAG was settled in Taiwan as part of the Sino-American Mutual Defense Treaty. Although Americans came for a military purpose, several American tourism related industries, such as American clubs and bars, were established to welcome the US guests. This brought various degrees of American cultural influence in Taiwan.

At that time, partner dance was mostly allowed for upper middle class, high level politicians, and foreigners. For example, partner dance lessons were taught in the YMCA and international house of Taipei,⁸⁰ where only foreigners or elites could attend.⁸¹ It was also common that the private ballroom dance instructors to bribe a police officer in exchange for continuing their dance class during the 1950-60s.⁸² However, in 1960, the Professional Ballroom Dancing Association of R.O.C. (中華民國國際標準舞蹈協會) was founded by Chang Zhuan-wan (張傳琬), who had a good connection with the president Chiang Ching-kuo (蔣經國)⁸³.

While elites and politicians could attend exclusive partner dance events, young professionals and citizens could learn partner dance in the *tufeng wu* practices. This was because that social partner dance practices in Europe, such as baroque dance, polka, tango, and waltz, were considered as part of international folkdance repertoire, and therefore were allowed in the CYC's *tufeng wu* training system. The popularity of partner dance in *tufeng wu* attracted Taiwanese dance instructors to choreograph their own versions of partner dance

⁸⁰ The International House of Taipei was established in 1957 by sponsors and enthusiasts who were educated in foreign countries and subsequently housed in international houses within Taiwan that corresponded to the locations where they had studied abroad.

⁸¹ Based on my interview with Yang Chang-xiong on November, 22, 2013 in Taipei.

⁸² Huang, Huanghui(黃輝煌), "Dance Hall Under The Table: The struggle of organizing a dance studio and the Future for Dance Industry (地下舞廳-舞蹈教室的苦楚和時代舞業的流向,「臺灣國際標準舞五十年回憶」之(4))", *Dance World Journal* (舞世界月刊), vol 25.

⁸³ Based on my interview with Yang Chang-xiong on November, 22, 2013 in Taipei.



1965. 10

FIGURE 2.11. *Tufeng Wu* party in Taipei in 1965. Notice that the various national flags hanging from the ceiling were the common decorative style in *Tufeng Wu* parties at that time. Courtesy of Lin Chiu (林秋月).

pieces, such as the *Merry Window Waltz* (風流寡婦, choreographed by Chang Chingsan in 1963) and *Paso Doble* (帕索蒂娜, choreographed by Yang Changxiong in 1981). In these partner dance pieces, dance steps were simple and basic with many repetitions. These partner dances did not require high dance skills and were easy for ordinary people to learn. In the licit *tufeng wu* venues, dance practitioners found a way to break rules and dance with the opposite sex that was not exclusive to the elite.

From the time the KMT retreated to Taiwan until the lifting of Martial Law, dance practices illustrated the governmental manipulation of the body. While the government may push forward a specific kind of body discipline, the examination of various quotidian dance illustrates how dance practitioners brought limited personal agency by breaking rules through dance practice. The examination of the national and combative body alongside the social partner dance body tells us how dance has the capability of both reinforcing and resisting the

dominant social norms, and how complicated this negotiation could be.

Conclusion

This chapter compares three different mainstream bodies throughout Taiwanese dance history. It focuses on the bodily discipline of comportment in Taiwanese society and traces a genealogy of corporeal conformity in Taiwanese society. It looks at how social partner dance produces meaning and resistance in responding to these various mainstream bodies. By examining how partner dance engages with corporeal discipline and rule breaking in each specific political context, it illustrates how modernity, colonialism, Confucian conformity, and nationalism are all represented within dance practice. This suggests that dance as a site of everyday political meaning making can work against a reified notion of abstract political reality bound to governmental power.

The chapter aims to retain specificity in theorizing dance practice as a whole in relation to socio-political perspectives. On the one hand, dance is closely correlated with body and mind, and is therefore frequently used by authorities as a tool to manipulate human beings. On the other hand, dance is also one of the most direct bodily expressions for people to pursue their own expression and liberation. The ambiguity that arises from this contradiction is embedded in dance practice as illustrated throughout this chapter: bodily discipline of comportment in Taiwanese society sets up a genealogy of corporeal conformity, yet simultaneously offers a space for rule breaking in Taiwanese society.

Most Taiwanese historians categorize Taiwan's history in three periods: Japanese colonization, KMT retreat to Taiwan and the Martial Law era, and after lifting of Martial Law. However, this research suggests that the history of corporeal conformity in Taiwan is more based on the time period relating to government policy, such as "Dōka" movement,

minzu wudao propagation movement, and Chinese Cultural Renaissance Movement. It offers a nuanced time frame to examine the history of Taiwan.

More importantly, this study shows the agency of partner dance practitioners even before the lifting of Martial Law. What has emerged in this study is an identifiable social trend that shows how dance gradually became a democratized leisure activity of personal choice rather than combative duty dominated from government authorities. By locating salsa dance in relation to other partner dances in Taiwanese history, I contextualize the meaning of salsa in contemporary Taiwan. The history of partner dance in Taiwan is a history of rule breaking of Taiwanese conformity: Keep dancing; keep fighting.

*Democracy at 4 am
Morning without YOU is a dwindled dawn.*

--New York Times 2014/3/31

Hundreds of opponents of a trade pact with China demonstrated in and around Taiwan's legislature Wednesday, in the most serious challenge to date to President Ma Ying-jeou's policy of moving the democratic island of 23 million people economically closer to Communist China.

--The Washington Post 2014/3/20

“China trade pact foes occupy Taiwanese legislature”

While this chapter was being written, my home country—Taiwan— was entering an uneasy moment in which the already tense situation of conflict and distrust between the people and the government reached a pinnacle. On March 31, *The New York Times* ran a full page advertisement entitled “Democracy at 4am: What unprecedented protest means for Taiwan.” This advertising campaign, sponsored by 3,621 anonymous Taiwanese citizens, was created in five days using an online funding platform. It describes how hundreds of citizens occupied the parliament for the first time in Taiwan’s history to protest the passing of the controversial Cross-Strait Services Trade Agreement (CSSTA)⁸⁴ with China without giving the Agreement a clause-by-clause review. This movement, known as the Sunflower Student Movement (太陽花學運), was a by a coalition of students and civic groups who occupied parliament from March 18 to April 10, 2014, in the Legislative Yuan of the Republic of China (ROC, commonly referred to as Taiwan). They protested the passing of the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement by the ruling party, Kuomintang (KMT), at the legislature without a

⁸⁴ The CSSTA is a liberalizing trade pact that opens up 64 Taiwanese service industries, including those in banking, telecommunication, healthcare, printing, film, and tourism to Chinese investment and businesses. According to this trade agreement, it would not only increase the competition of local labor and the price of real estate in Taiwan, but it could also very likely advance China's push toward political unification through economic coercion to Taiwan.

proper democratic reviewing procedure.⁸⁵ The disappointment evidenced by this protest emerged when the expected economic recovery did not occur as promised by president Ma Ying-jeou, and this disappointment was instead reinforced by Kuomintang's controversial political attitude toward the People's Republic of China (PRC).

The Sunflower Movement went largely unnoticed in the Western Media. This indifferent attitude toward Taiwan has been especially traumatic for Taiwanese, as being forgotten by the rest of the world has created a sense of insecurity. This might be the reason why citizens contributed money to advertise in the New York Times and get attention from abroad. It also indicates that external validation is important to Taiwan. In addition, the Sunflower Movement raises the question of Taiwan's national identity. The occupation of the legislature can be seen as a response to the loss of legitimacy of Ma's administration, especially with regards to his political attitude toward China. Moreover, on top of the reformist demands over procedural transparency in the passing of the trade agreement, the citizens have pushed for a re-examination of the debate about a unique Taiwanese national identity.

The struggle over Taiwanese identity appears not just in social protest, but also in Taiwanese artist creations and movement practice. This chapter examines how Taiwanese salsa practitioners construct their national identity through cosmopolitan salsa practice. I begin with an examination of the complicated relationship between nationalism and cosmopolitanism as it articulates itself in salsa practice in Taiwan. As Taiwanese dance performances are well-known in the international dance world, dance allows Taiwanese nationals to get outside recognition easily. Salsa is cosmopolitan practice, which allows these Taiwanese dancers to perform their first world status and to negotiate personal and national

⁸⁵ After negotiations with the Prime Minister failed, and a bloody oppression resulted by the government's attempt to stop protesters' occupation to the Cabinet Offices in Executive Yuan, about five hundred thousand Taiwanese joined the students on the streets.

identities. Taiwanese salsa dancers express themselves in the international salsa congresses, create visual art about salsa, and compose new salsa music. I argue that salsa offers Taiwanese practitioners an opportunity to develop a cosmopolitan self and create global citizenship, thereby differentiating themselves from a Chinese identification.

Taiwanese Colonial History and National Anxiety

Taiwan's colonial history resulted in a complicated Taiwanese national identity. For four hundred years, Taiwan has been subject to colonial occupation.⁸⁶ Although Han Chinese immigrants have settled in Taiwan in the 17th century, Taiwan was ceded to the Empire of Japan in 1895 as part of the conditions stipulated at the end of the Sino-Japanese War. However, at the end of World War II, the Republic of China (ROC), led by the Chinese Nationalist Kuomintang (KMT), became the governing polity in Taiwan. In 1949, after losing control of Mainland China following the Chinese civil war, the ROC government under the KMT moved to Taiwan. Since then, Taiwan has been mostly ruled by the Chinese nationalists.

From 1948 to 1971, the ROC government was recognized by a majority of countries in the world as the legitimate government of Mainland China. However, the government from both PRC and ROC each claim to be the only government of China, and label the other as illegitimate. In 1971, the United Nations recognized PRC as China's sole representative in the United Nations. Under this diplomatic pressure, many countries switched their recognition from ROC to the PRC in the 1970s. Since then, Taiwan has become a nation without official state status.

⁸⁶ Taiwan has been colonized by multiple states, including The Netherlands (1624-1662), Spain (1624-1662), China (1662-1895), and Japan (1895-1945).

Gradually, the practical understanding of Taiwan has shifted away from predominantly and officially Chinese to “Taiwanese,” an identity understood as plural and locally-defined. However, this ideology is completely rejected by the PRC. In other words, the PRC would rather the government in Taiwan retain its contestatory ROC nationality— competing with PRC for the status as the “real China”— than be “Taiwan,” an entirely new country. As a result, despite Taiwan’s outward focus to the world economically and culturally, politically dominant nation-states or organizations such as the United States and the United Nations have refused to officially acknowledge Taiwanese independence for fear of offending China.

Now Taiwan and China are two separate and different sovereignties. While China’s national identity is clear, Taiwan’s nation-state status is contested. Abroad, Taiwanese are often officially not categorized as from Taiwan but instead from Chinese Taipei, a province of China. For example, in attending international events, such as Olympic Games, under the influence of China, Taiwanese athletes are often forced to compete under the banner of “Chinese Taipei,” and to take down the ROC national flag. In other words, Taiwan cannot fully participate as an independent country in globalization, which still relies on the framework of the nation-state. The vexed relationship with China and the West has made Taiwan a place where citizens are struggling over their identity. This situation creates conditions of anxiety for Taiwanese people.

Taiwan’s status as a nation has switched many times, and this contested nationalism have resulted in the psychological worry of being betrayed and marginalized by others. This occupation by various colonizers has been a source of anxiety for people who live in Taiwan. *The Orphan of Asia* (1945), a novel written by Zhuoliu Wu, works best to illustrate this identity anxiety for Taiwanese people. *The Orphan of Asia* is about man named Hu Taiming who is born in Japanese-colonized Taiwan, raised in the Chinese traditions by his family, but

forced into the Japanese educational system. However, he does not feel at home in either context, neither in Japan, where he goes to pursue a higher education, nor in mainland China, where he marries and has a family. Even worse, due to his colonial background, Taiming is accused of spying for both China and for Japan during the war. He doesn't seem to belong anywhere. This dispossession and abandonment from both Japan and China in this novel points to Taiwan's colonial identity vis-à-vis China and Japan in the years of the Pacific War. Beyond the immediacy of the novel, the association of modern Taiwan with the psychic trauma of being orphaned galvanizes collectivity and enables the Taiwanese to eulogize their "national" history as one of betrayal and abandonment. This "Orphan" metaphor explains the troublesome Taiwanese national identity even now.

Taiwanese have to deal with their colonial and national history. The national identity struggle is not only illustrated in literature, but also in dance. Dance practices around the world follow similar patterns, aiding a country's construction of a defensive nationalism in response to a colonial past. For example, dance theorist Marta Savigliano examines the historical trajectory of tango from Argentina (lower class practice associate with prostitutes) to Europe (salons in Paris for First world elites) and back to Argentina (as a national cultural product for all Argentinians). She argues that this performance is the power play between colonizer/colonized. Savigliano analyzes how "auto-exoticism" works to legitimate representation of tango as a symbol of national identity and cultural product for Argentinians. Auto-exoticism, according to Savigliano, functions as aesthetic-political device that sees oneself as an exotic Other. By pointing out that passion is consumed in the form of auto-exoticized performance, she claims that tango has entered the world political economy of passion as an exotic raw material (Savigliano, 1995: 3). In those analyses, Savigliano vividly illustrates how the "auto-exoticism" works in tango to legitimate representation of tango as a

symbol of national identity and cultural product for Argentineans. (Savigliano, 1995: 3).

Dance can be seen as an example of the defensive nationalism. For example, Bharata natyam practitioners aligned their projects with political discourses through engagements with this dance's past colonial tradition to construct India's nationalism. Bharata natyam from the 1920s to 1940s was developed in response to the nationalist movements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Bharata natyam practitioners aligned their projects with political discourses through engagements with this dance's past tradition (O'Shea, 2007). Moreover, Kandyan dance, as a state-supported art form in Sri Lanka, allows us to explore the transformation that took place after Sri Lanka gained its independence from Britain in 1948. This ritual dance was originally from the central mountainous region of Kandy, and became a state-sponsored, national symbol of ethnic identity (Reed, 2010). There is a neo-ethnic body choreographed in the Philippine Ballet in which indigenous dance becomes symbolic of the nation through processes of conflation and metonymy (Ness, 1997). As dance is highly visible, the role of dance in the formation of national identity has been remarked on by many scholars.

Like these examples, Taiwanese dance has become highly politicized as the choice of what the representation of a country should be depends on one form taking over another. On the other hand, due to the burden of a colonized history in Taiwan that positions Taiwanese nationalism as a defensive nationalism, Taiwanese dance illustrates a defensive national identity construction. Just as the nationalism is constructed defensively, so too is it imagined from outside, as well as from within and staged for an international viewership. Much like in the Philippines, where dance performances are constructed via appropriating a multiplicity of indigenous dance and music as the cultural expression of the Philippine nation state so as to claim south Philippines as part of the nation (Gaerlan, 1999), Taiwanese nationalism is

displayed and performed so as to be persuasive to the outsider and international audiences.

This analysis of nationalism that is defined from the outside is central to my research.

The Construction of Taiwanese Nationalism

A nation is “an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.” (Anderson, 1991:6) Nationalism is an abstract relationship defined by geographic boundaries and economic collectivism, which is collective in the sense that all must participate. The production of nationalism takes place in the space of our shared imagination. An imagined community is based on members’ mental images of their affinity with a group that they belong to. This idea of an imagined community is important to Taiwanese nationalism as Taiwan has to construct its nationalism through various imaginings.

In the construction of nationalism, nationalism theorist Tom Nairn argues that nationalism looks to the past in order to provide sustenance for the national community for the future (Nairn, 1975). It stresses tradition, or continuation and maintenance of the “national memory,” as a way of uniting the populace and thus ensuring the nation’s extension into the future. In this sense, national identity is dualistic; it looks forward while at the same time looking backward. This change in the apprehension of time enables us to think about the construction of the nation as a community imagined through both the past and the future. In this regard, nations construct their identity through simultaneous reference to the past and the future.

In Taiwan, there was initially a claim for a Chinese identity. Taiwan state-builders positioned the island as the site of an “authentic” Chinese political and cultural system, the true government in exile. For example, while the Imperial Palaces of the Ming and Qing Dynasties are located in Beijing, the Chinese treasures of arts of the past thousands of years

are well-collected in the National Palace Museum in Taiwan. Additionally, Taiwan preserves traditional not simplified Chinese script,⁸⁷ Confucian discipline, and moral values, which, they suggest, have been eroded or dismantled by Chinese state socialism. Symbolically, these suggest that although Mainland China has structures of Chinese heritage—such as landscapes and heritage sites—the contents of “China” in Taiwan is more authentic, since Taiwan preserves the true essences of Chinese culture. Moreover, nation builders strove to link these Chinese values to capitalism, democracy, and an active relationship to the rest of the world, especially to the market economies of North America and Europe. This discourse of Taiwan as a more authentic China is reinforced by suggesting that PRC-controlled Mainland China has been destroyed by communist politics, while ROC-controlled Taiwan represents the economic, capitalist, and democratic China that follows with the Cold War system.

While the pro-China government has tried to preserve Taiwan as China, there is an increasing awareness of Taiwanese independence. The National Chengchi University’s Election Study Center has regularly conducted a survey, asking respondents whether they identify as Taiwanese, as both Taiwanese and Chinese, or as Chinese. The recent poll, conducted in June 2014, found that 60.4 percent of respondents identify as Taiwanese, and only 32.7 percent of those questioned identified as “both Taiwanese and Chinese,” while a measly 3.5 percent identified as Chinese.⁸⁸ According to the “Changes in the Unification—

⁸⁷ Simplified Chinese is standardized written Chinese that is used in Mainland China and by Singaporeans, while traditional Chinese is used in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau, and by oversea Chinese. The PRC government has promoted simplified Chinese for use since the 1950s. While the modern shapes of traditional Chinese characters first appeared during the Han Dynasty, and have been stable since the 5th century, simplified Chinese is a systematically simplified character set that includes not only structural simplification but also substantial reduction in the total number of standardized Chinese characters. Since the simplified Chinese cannot be traced back to its original Chinese characters, it is considered against “tradition” and thus absent of any cultural roots. Therefore, there is an ongoing debate on traditional Chinese characters and simplified Chinese characters concerning Chinese orthography among users of Chinese characters, especially with its implications for political ideology and cultural identity.

⁸⁸ The survey chart is from The Election Study Center at National Chengchi University in Taiwan. See also: http://esc.nccu.edu.tw/files/news/cache.166_42562ed0.jpg.w320_h227.jpg

Independence Stances of Taiwanese as Tracked in Surveys” by the Election Study Center, NCCU, there is very little support in Taiwan for unification, whether immediate (1.3 percent) or eventual (7.9 percent), and those numbers have declined for the past two decades; 18 percent are in favor of eventual independence, with another 5.9 percent favoring independence as soon as possible, and those numbers are trending upwards. And 25.2 percent of respondents are in favor of maintaining the status quo indefinitely while 34.3 percent prefer maintain status quo, and decide at later date.⁸⁹

Taiwanese have enjoyed de facto independence for six decades and democracy for two and have increasingly identified with their locality and oppose unification with the mainland. The increasing support for maintaining the status quo showed in the survey can be read as increasing support for continued de facto independence and increasing opposition to unification. Although the majority of the Taiwanese considered themselves as Taiwanese rather than Chinese, there are still different ways for Taiwanese people to respond to their national identity struggle: first, to consider themselves as Taiwanese culturally and politically; second, to consider themselves as culturally Chinese, but politically Taiwanese.

Just like those who consider themselves as culturally Chinese but politically Taiwanese, many performers in Taiwan use Chinese metaphors to stage a nostalgia for China that evokes their national identity struggle. This nostalgia comes from the Taiwanese exile literature before/after lifting of the Martial law in 1970s-1980s.⁹⁰ It is a longing for the past or for a lost home, a position which is located in the future but looking backward. This nostalgia in Taiwan refers to an idealized remembrance for a time long past in China and express sadness

⁸⁹ Source: Election Study Center, N.C.C.U., important political attitude trend distribution.

⁹⁰ For example, Taiwanese writer Yu Guangzhong (余光中) and Lin Haiyin (林海音), are example of this nostalgia literature tradition. They wrote and value an idealized time of their childhood memories in the past China.

for missing the old time China. Therefore, many performers use Chinese metaphors that reference the Taiwan's past, ostensibly arising from a Chinese legacy while also mourning the loss of mainland China. For example, Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan stages a nostalgic longing for a Chinese past. By contextualizing Cloud Gate Dance Theatre's work into four parts in relation to different cultural and political states in Taiwan—such as Chineseness in *Tale of the White Serpent* (1975), Taiwaneseesness in *Legacy* (1978), and cosmopolitanism in *Rite of Spring, Taipei, 1984* (1984)—dance scholar Lin argues that the company's choreography signals changes in Taiwanese national identity (Lin, 2010). However, this complexity of national nostalgia extends beyond the frame of the China-Taiwan love/ hate binary system. Something that is hidden behind the politically correct wave of “authentic Chinese in Taiwan” is also trying to establish a concept of an independent and democratic Taiwan (Chen, 2013; Chen, 2009).

For those who consider themselves as culturally and politically Taiwanese, there is a different strategy. For them, Taiwan falls into a double bind of sharing a common heritage with China— with a history of representing itself (Taiwan) as the “true” China— while also striving to establish itself as a separate country. In other words, for these people, Taiwan shares a cultural identity with China, but also represents itself as diametrically opposed to China politically.⁹¹ How can the Taiwanese deploy their Chinese heritage, while celebrating a distinctly Taiwanese identity?

East Asian studies scholar Shu-mei Shih has argued that Taiwan, because of its vexed relationship with China, avoids reference to Chinese tradition and, instead, cultivates national identity through the embrace of foreign cultural products. Shih suggests that globalization

⁹¹ I am speaking of dominant cultural identities in Taiwan. Minority identities in Taiwan and China are very different from one another.

legitimizes Taiwanese autonomy in the international community. According to Shih, globalization has shifted the focus of Taiwan away from a Chinese “ethnic” origin, enabling Taiwan to represent its multicultural democracy to the world. This “new” Taiwan pursues globalization. Shih further argues that some Taiwanese people cultivate a deliberately cosmopolitan national identity through the embrace of foreign cultural products, a process that Shih labels “cultural inauthenticity.” Shih asserts that this “inauthenticity” legitimizes Taiwanese autonomy in the international community by staging Taiwan’s modernity to the Western world (Shih, 2003). Shih points out that Taiwanese writers and artists, such as Wu Mali (吳瑪俐), strategically appropriate Western canons and theories,⁹² applying them to the Taiwanese case. By doing so, these artists are able to gain first world visibility. In this sense, globalization shifts the focus of Taiwan away from its ethno-cultural Chinese heritage, and enables Taiwan to represent its multicultural democracy in the world.

Extending Shih’s argument that inauthenticity legitimates Taiwan’s cosmopolitan national identity, I propose that the popularity of salsa dance in Taiwan is a particularly compelling example of this celebration of the foreign in Taiwanese society. Salsa is a compelling example of this celebration of the foreign because it allows the practitioners to flirt with the idea of an imagined identity. Since this imagined identity is temporary and indicates a future possibility, the practitioners are able to play with the globalized identity without threatening their own original identities. These Taiwanese salsa practitioners construct an oppositional, yet *inauthentic*, Taiwanese identity through salsa practice as a

⁹² Another dance example: dance theorist SanSan Kwan has argued that Nine Songs by the Cloud Gate Dance Theatre uses inauthentic East Asian cultural components to deal with Taiwan’s nostalgia for a pastoral-idyllic past. By incorporating South East Asian theatrical elements, such as those in Indian, Indonesian, Japanese, aboriginal Taiwanese, and Chinese traditions, this piece “offers an idealized vision of a Taiwanese nation constituted not by one monolithic, definitive culture but by multiple cultural influences (Kwan, 2013: 48).” This shows the Cloud Gate Dance Theatre’s choreographic strategy to position Taiwan not as a uniform notion of Chinese-ness, but a more heterogeneous Taiwan by this inauthentic pan-South East Asian aesthetics.

critical trope against the power of the nation-state form through a cosmopolitan salsa setting. These practitioners embody their identity formation. That is, they actively choose to produce meaning through their bodily practices as a soft resistance, one which will not risk causing any social and political trouble with China.

What is Cosmopolitanism

The word “cosmopolitan” comes from the Ancient Greek word “κοσμοπολίτης (kosmopolítēs),” meaning “citizen of the world.” It can be divided into two etymons: “κόσμος” (kósmos, means “world”) + “πολίτης” (polítēs, means “citizen”). In the contemporary English usage from the Oxford English Dictionary, cosmopolitan as an adjective has three meanings: (1) Familiar with and at ease in many different countries and cultures; (2) Including people from many different countries; (3) Having an exciting and glamorous character associated with travel and a mixture of cultures. Cosmopolitan in contemporary usage also refer to a utopian idea of an equal and balanced world where everyone is free to participate. At personal level, cosmopolitanism implies a focus on sophistication, broad-mindedness to other cultures, and familiarity with the ways of the world. A cosmopolitan is someone who views the whole world as his or her homeland.

Cosmopolitanism as a concept is especially useful for Taiwanese citizens due to Taiwan's status quo political condition. As cosmopolitanism can also be perceived as an idealized concept of any citizen of the world could be exempt from national prejudices, it has also been seen as a rhetorical device used by elites to “justify the status quo, by attempting to ‘universalize’ the hegemonic pretensions of the dominant culture (Conversi, 2000: 37).” This may explain why Taiwanese upper middle class practitioners use cosmopolitan salsa to perform their first world status in the world.

While cosmopolitanism sometimes is viewed as the opposite of nationalism, the case of Taiwanese citizens use cosmopolitan salsa to negotiate their national identity tells us otherwise. In theory, cosmopolitanism could be viewed as a contested political quality that works both within and beyond the nation (Cheah, 1998). Historically, there is a discourse of “cosmopolitanism” that derives from its Greek linguistic roots, Renaissance humanism, and Kant’s usage in the 18th century (Kant, 1983; Kleingeld, 2012; Nussbaum, 1997), and therefore the concept of cosmopolitanism was formed before the formation of the modern nation-state. As a result, cosmopolitanism cannot simply be cast as an idea that seeks to erode nationalism (Cheah, 1998; Calhoun, 2008; Douzinas, 2007; Conversi, 2000). This is especially true in the case of Taiwanese salsa practice, in which nationalism is facilitated by cosmopolitanism.

In addition, cosmopolitanism is also a specific type of cultural formation. This idea is useful in examining the Taiwanese identity struggle through salsa practices.

Ethnomusicologist Joanna Bosse considers cosmopolitanism “a network of shared and articulated values across geographical, racial, and ethnic divides (Bosse, 2013: 223)”. These common values and acts result in an affinity between various people across vast distances with little to no face-to-face interaction between them— a type of supranational imagined identity that “individuals participate in with variable levels of regularity, consistency, intensity, and investment (Bosse, 2013: 223).” In this sense, the cosmopolitan setting of salsa offers Taiwanese practitioners an alternative way to negotiate their identity.

In what follows, I examine the complicated relationship between nationalism and cosmopolitanism with regards to salsa practice in Taiwan. Taiwanese salsa serves as a means of challenging the discourse of nationalism and cosmopolitanism. As scholars have argued a flexibly citizenship that is performative (Joseph, 1999; Ong, 1999), I propose the idea of

flirting with global citizenship as a way for Taiwanese salsa practitioners to strategically play with their national identity on the cosmopolitan salsa stage. To put it more directly, Taiwanese people need to perform this global citizenship to position themselves as Taiwanese and not Chinese. The global citizenship in Taiwanese salsa practice indicates the idea of *inauthentic* citizenship that enables Taiwanese to be visible in the world.

Salsa Cosmopolitanism: Salsa Congresses around the World

Salsa dance is a striking example of cosmopolitanism in dance. It is a malleable dance form onto which everyone who practices it can add his or her own personal signature. It is a transnational and transcultural dance form that has traveled from the Americas to many other countries and taken on diverse meanings among its participants. As discussed in the introduction, salsa is transnational in its very origins (Aparicio: 1998, Boggs: 1992, Rondón: 2008, Waxer: 2002). It is a dance that best illustrates the contemporary phenomenon of the mixture of culture concomitantly with the cultural problematic of notions of “authentic” roots.⁹³

In addition, there are salsa congresses organized around the world, which are ideal sites for examining cosmopolitanism in globalized salsa practice. A salsa congress is a term used to describe an international salsa event that meets some of the characteristics of a professional congress—a conference for specialists or researchers to present and discuss their work. A salsa congress, however, is mainly a meeting of professional and amateur salsa dancers to learn salsa as well as to network with other salsa lovers. Salsa congresses normally contain shows, workshops, parties, live bands, booths, and master classes or competitions. At

⁹³ By “authentic,” I am not assuming there is a “real” “authenticity” but I am more interested in the performing of the “authenticity.”

the same time there will be salsa related goods and services, such as post-dance massages, salsa shoes and dress sales, and discount studio packages available for purchase. The main purpose of the congresses is to get all dancers from different areas to work together.⁹⁴ It provides an important channel for the exchange of information between salsa practitioners.

Today, there are more than 50 international salsa events around the world, including those in Europe, Asia, and the Americas (McMains, 2015: 293), organized or co-organized internationally by Torres Production, a salsa promotion company founded by the Los Angeles-based famous salsa promoter Albert Torres.⁹⁵ Torres founded his own congress in Los Angeles in 1999. In contrast to the first world salsa congress held in Puerto Rico in 1997 produced by Eli Irizarri, Torres's congress focused more on the dancer's side rather than the music side; it showcased dancers instead of bands. Torres claims that "just like paella (a Spanish dish), the more ingredients, the better it tastes. So the more rhythms, the better the salsa is."⁹⁶ For him, non-Western dance elements such as west coast swing, kizomba⁹⁷, and bachata are welcome to be part of this salsa fusion. This focus on a mixed style of dance exists throughout the international salsa world.

Not surprisingly, in the closing remarks after the last performance at the 2000 salsa congress in Los Angeles, Torres addressed the meaning of the congress's slogan, "creating unity through salsa (Garcia, 2013: 1)." Torres created this slogan in 1991 with the aim of relating salsa to dance moves rather than to music. In international congresses, salsa is promoted as a universal language by the organizers so much so that dancers claim that salsa

⁹⁴ Based on my phone interview with Albert Torres on August 26th, 2014.

⁹⁵ All salsa congresses are organized or co-organized by Torres as he makes "salsa congress" as his patent.

⁹⁶ Based on my phone interview with Albert Torres on August 26th, 2014 in Los Angeles.

⁹⁷ Kizomba is a music and dance form Angola. With its slow, erotic, and romantic touch in the dance that is similar to bachata, Kizomba has become more and more popular among salsa communities.

can unite the world by dancing together. The ways that people in salsa space enact their social membership and the ideology of “unity through salsa” might play important roles in its popularity worldwide.

According to Torres, there is a congress philosophy that emphasizes a “salsa heaven” for the dancers to enjoy. A “salsa heaven” is unfolds according to how the congress is decorated, staged, and lightened with all the details to enable the practitioners to clearly acknowledge that they are in a performed salsa world. He said, “salsa heaven would be a place where everyone, no matter what the style you dance, whether its Cuban style, rueda de casino, on 1 or on 2, or even Colombian style, even though we have different styles and different ways of dancing to the music, the feeling to our heart is the same. I remember one time at a congress, I saw people from Israel dancing with people from Syria.”⁹⁸

At the international salsa events, everyone who dances salsa fits in, not by looking and behaving the same, but by improvising variations on a given theme and performing mastery of salsa moves. Even beginners know the convention and codes of how to dress and behave properly in a salsa event. There is a “universal” contemporary sense of a shared context that accommodates difference. People of different races, ages, and genders, are all in the lineup or circle around. Everyone dances to the same music, with variations that keep partners attentive to each other and aware of their dancing neighbors.

Many salsa dancers feel connected to other salsa practitioners in disparate locations throughout the world by their dance practice. Particularly in places far from cultural centers, people may get involved in salsa precisely because it offers them a way of making a connection with cultural Others (Bosse, 2014). These salsa practitioners share a similar commonality and interest in salsa. This unique quality of belonging in salsa allows

⁹⁸ Based on my phone interview with Albert Torres on August 26th, 2014 in Los Angeles.

practitioners to play with the idea of an imagined cosmopolitan identity in the globalized salsa community.

“Young salsa dancers are becoming Olympians, athletes in the dance,” Torres once said in an interview for *New York Times*.⁹⁹ An Olympic Games is a cosmopolitan event for several reasons: first, the idea of Olympic Games allows various nations to compete in sporting events equally; second, it legitimates a utopian idea of every country being equally represented despite the fact that there are still countries who cannot fully participate in these international events. For example, in 2012, a South Sudanese refugee ran the Olympic marathon as an independent “stateless” athlete. Similarly, Taiwan had to compete under the name of “Chinese Taipei.” Therefore, Olympic Games cannot be seen as a pure utopian idea of cosmopolitanism without the political framework of nation-states.

Olympic is a feast of interpretation, participants “measure who we think we are by who we think the others are, and measured by them in return (Macaloon,1982).” Like in Olympic Games, salsa dancers perform or compete under their own countries’ names in the salsa congresses. This linkage of international salsa events to the international Olympic Games indicates a utopian idea of cosmopolitanism in international salsa events. It is significant to compare salsa dancers to athletes because in salsa congresses, a Taiwanese team can compete or perform as a Taiwanese team, not as a Chinese Taipei team. By using the term “congress” instead of international events, or simply workshop, salsa congress organizers officially positions salsa events through a diplomatic framework.

Unlike the Olympic Games, the congress focuses on meetings instead of sport, which implies a discussion rather than competition. A “congress” event suggests a formal meeting or series of meetings for discussion. Therefore, based on these characteristics, there is a

⁹⁹ Bloom, Julie. 2007. “Salsa Spins Beyond Its Roots,” *New York Times*. July 29, 2007. Web. 19, August, 2014.

utopian idea of legitimate equality among participants from various nations. This idea is cosmopolitan. In other words, salsa congresses offer a political space for practitioners to actively imagine their cosmopolitan identity without facing the reality of current nation-state restrictions on those who cannot fully participate.

Salsa congresses contain several important cosmopolitan elements, including the mixing of cultures, the opportunity for practitioners to travel and make international connections, and the ideal of salsa uniting the world through the congress. Additionally, as a globalized dance form, salsa is promoted as a cosmopolitan and urban dance practice that reaffirms an understanding of a passionate Latino body: already “inauthentic” and “mixed” origins, belonging to everyone, and personalizable as you can “make it your own”. All these components contribute to a cosmopolitan salsa world that provide a space for Taiwanese practitioners to negotiate their identities with other salsa practitioners around the world.

Moreover, as discussed in the chapter two, there is a genealogy of a disciplined Confucian body in Chinese history that is grounded in a notion of authenticity in Taiwan. In contrast, the “exotic,” passionate Latin body provides a way for Taiwanese to distance themselves from this disciplined body. In other words, salsa offers a cosmopolitan compartment for Taiwanese dancers. This unique quality of cosmopolitanism in salsa allows Taiwanese practitioners to carve out a space for themselves to construct their identity.

The embodiment of salsa practice serves as a site where exotics negotiate their identity with other exotics through salsa dance movement. In what follows, I examine three salsa congresses related cases to show how globalized salsa offers a space for Taiwanese to engage with their inauthentic but Taiwanese national identity. These cases are Taiwanese salsa performance in an international salsa congress in Shanghai, Taiwanese salsa practitioners who travel around the world, and international salsa events organized in Taiwan.

Performed Taiwanese salsa in the Shanghai international Salsa Event

In the summer of 2013, there was an international salsa event called SalsaMemucho in Shanghai, China. Taiwanese dance instructor Larry Shao's dance company—"La Salsa Taipei"—was invited to perform his dance project *Taipei Mambo Project* at this event. While most of the choreographic choices made in this performance showcase were showy as a "salsa spectacle," Shao's performance addressed the atmosphere of an imagined salsa being in his piece. I compare Shao's choreography with two other different types of choreographies in this showcase: the Italian team "Tropical Gem" and the Chinese team "China Impression." With an emphasis on analyzing the choreographic choices made in these pieces, I assert that while the choreography in "China Impression" depicts an "authentic" Chinese interpretation of salsa, Shao's piece positions Taiwan in a cosmopolitan salsa scene. While the choreography in the Italian team "Tropical Gem" focuses mostly on high-technique movement and the Chinese team "China Impression" depicts an "authentic" Chinese component of salsa, Shao's piece positions Taiwan in the cosmopolitan salsa scene. By tactically choreographing the piece, Shao's *Taipei Mambo Project* drives the focus away from China-Taiwan issues, but at the same time puts the unique Taiwanese dance upfront in the global salsa stage.

The city of Shanghai is marked by cosmopolitanism. It is one of the most socially liberated and vibrant cities in China. Shanghai is also laden with memory due to its colonial history. Known as the "pearl of the Orient" and "The Paris of the East," Shanghai's history spans over a thousand years and closely parallels the development of modern China. Since the Qing dynasty, it has been developed as the principal trading port, representing a diverse synthesis of influences. In the 19th century the British forced Shanghai to become a treaty

port, opening the city to foreign involvement. Shanghai was then turned into a city carved up into autonomous leased land administered contemporaneously by the British, French, and Americans, all independent of Chinese law. Each colonizer brought its own particular culture, art, architecture, and social system to Shanghai.



FIGURE 3.1. Poster of 2013 SalsaMemucho in Shanghai.

Since the early 20th century, Shanghai has had the most dynamic nightlife among Chinese cities. With dance halls, brothels, glitzy restaurants, international clubs, and even a foreign-run racetrack, Shanghai is the city that contains the richest dancing culture in China. Now, with economic growth and foreign investment, Shanghai is again one of the most important financial centers in the world, and a place where beauty and glamour coexist with kitsch and capitalism. As a city of paradox and exchange, Shanghai fits into the salsa nightlife scene perfectly.



FIGURE 3.2. 2013 SalsaMemucho in Shanghai. Photo by I-Wen Chang.

The 2013 SalsaMemucho's welcome party was held in the Shanghai Rose Bar (玫瑰园) by The Bund, a waterfront area in central Shanghai.¹⁰⁰ The location suggests the glamorous

¹⁰⁰ The bar is located in an area near the Huangpu River (黄浦江), placing it in the zone with the richest historical architectures and which is most representative of Shanghai's historical changes since it became a treaty port in 1842. The building, constructed in 1905, was formerly the Shanghai Rowing Club – which introduced one of Shanghai's first indoor pools in 1953, and laid the foundation for water sports in the city.

nightlife history of Shanghai and clearly communicates the idea that salsa is synonymous with glamour.¹⁰¹ The main party venue for the SalsaMemucho event, however, was on the 3rd Floor in the room called “Little Paramount (小百樂門),”¹⁰² a huge wooden floored dance hall with a glamorous art nouveau performance stage. This main party location is run by the communist governmental organization called Shanghai Lady Association (上海婦女聯合會). Therefore, if the welcome party venue brought a sense of the glorious history of Shanghai, the main party venue—due to its political connection to the communist government system—indicates a semi-governmental leisure place for nightlife in contemporary Shanghai.¹⁰³

This SalsaMemucho event was organized by Yuan Chu (朱世遠). Chu has the transnational experience that fits salsa cosmopolitan’s lifestyle. He was born in Taipei (Taiwan), and spent his teenage years in the Bolivian Amazonian State of Beni that borders Brazil, where he was exposed to Latin-American folklore and culture. After ten years in Latin America, his family moved to Portugal and later to Italy to start a trading business with China. He then studied business administration in the US, later living in Hong Kong and Shanghai while working in the real estate business. Now he lives in New York.¹⁰⁴ Chu’s multi-cultural and transnational life experience is a typical example of a cosmopolitan salsa

¹⁰¹ In the book *Glamour Addiction: Inside the American Ballroom Dance Industry*, dance scholar Juliet McMains uses glamour as a metaphor to describe how ballroom dancing, courtship, and the confusion of sexual desire with other kinds of desire are invoked. She refers to “Glamour” as the overarching mechanism that drives the American DanceSport system, and of production when they take on value symbolic of the entire system. (McMains, 2006)

¹⁰² This name also references the spectacular nightlife in Shanghai. “The Paramount” is a historical nightclub and dance hall in Shanghai. It was the largest ballroom in Shanghai before the People’s Liberation Army established control over the city in 1949. It resembles the glamorous nightlife of Western encounters in Shanghai.

¹⁰³ As is the law in China, public events need to be approved by the government. Those who have good networking relationships with the government can make things happen smoothly.

¹⁰⁴ Based on my interview with Chu during the SalsaMemucho Shanghai in Sep. 2013.

lover in Asia.¹⁰⁵

Chu states that “the SalsaMemucho movement was initiated in Shanghai with the mission of creating harmony and happiness amongst all styles of salsa.”¹⁰⁶ Under this description, what Chu wants to promote with SalsaMemucho Shanghai is a universalized and unified salsa in Shanghai. This idea is similar to Albert Torres’s concept of a universalized utopian salsa that erases regional differences. The organizer seeks to evoke cosmopolitanism in this international salsa event.

In this event, there were twenty workshops, twenty-four shows, and three night parties, offered by dance professionals and instructors from all over the world, including US, Italy, Cuba, Korea, China, Thailand, Canada, China, Turkey, Hong Kong, and Venezuela. Additionally, the event was moderated by two compères, a white woman and a Latino man. They both spoke fluent English, fluent Spanish, and intermediate Chinese. This multi-lingual ability, plus the non-Asian ethnicity, of the compères suggests that this event is international, and not merely regional. Under this cosmopolitan design, the Taiwanese team easily copes with part of this salsa scene in a Shanghai event.

In the previous chapters, I have discussed the interpersonal relationship among individual dancers in a social dance setting. In this section, I turn my focus to the choreographed dance on stage in the international Shanghai salsa event. While the previous chapters focus on the individual agency in improvised dance moves, this section emphasizes choreographers’ decision making in their choreography. These choreographers make their statements through a non-improvised choreography in their dance creations. Since these

¹⁰⁵ In Taiwan, salsa is introduced or promoted by those people with similar life experience as Chu, who live, work, or study abroad. Nevertheless, Chu is from a high-ranking politician family. According to Cho, social dances are part of his parent’s social life. This suggests that social dances are a privilege for elites.

¹⁰⁶ Based on my interview with Chu during the SalsaMemucho Shanghai in Sep. 2013.

performed pieces are choreographed beforehand, the dancers' interaction with each other are not as intersubjective in a social dance setting as I discussed in the previous chapters.

However, because these performed movements and formation of the dance are non-improvised, the analysis of choreographic choices allows us to read artists' choreography as political ideas and statements.

In the opening night showcase, various performance teams from all over the world were performing in the same venue. Among all the performances, the team "Tropical Gem" from Italy received the most acclaim. They depicted the highest extreme of a ballroom techniques and Los Angeles competitive salsa style, focusing mostly on showy, difficult techniques of choreographed movement. This style has become more and more popular in international salsa events. "Tropical Gem"'s piece began with two couples downstage and an object hidden beneath a red fabric upstage. Their initial movements were *staccato*, combined with forceful motions reminiscent of popping. These dancers clearly possessed substantial training with excellent technique. Five minutes into the piece, the music switched to a different tone. Three of the same dancers squatted down. The fourth male dancer approached the upstage object, and removed the red fabric. A topless black man, his face painted, jumped out from underneath, and started dancing. The remaining dancers kneeled on the ground. The black male dancer moved with a lower center of gravity, moving his hips and torso with vigorous undulation, pulsing his shoulders, and sweeping his arms across his body, emphasizing an African-derived dance style. The four other dancers surrounding him appeared to be awed and in a state of surrender to his dance technique.

Next, the black male dancer stood still, his body displayed sagittally at front and center. One of the white male dancers caressed his huge muscles. The scene suggested racial and sexual tension. Then, after his solo, the black male dancer disappeared while the remaining



FIGURE 3.3. The Black dancer jump out of scene from “Tropical Gem”.
Photo by I-Wen Chang.

four dancers now re-configured themselves as couples. With bulky muscles visible and dripping with sweat, he appeared as a primitive, African, sex object. The atmosphere was mysterious and reminiscent of a pre-historical ritual. It also invokes the objectification of African Caribbean under slavery. It is a taboo topic of desire and hyper sexualized black male body. An exoticized corporeality forms the foundations of the “spectacularized body” culture (Desmond, 1999). The relationship between the viewer and the viewed, within a postcolonial context, is based on the display of visible physical difference. “Tropical Gem”’s choreography illustrates how the black male dancer became a primitive sex idol in a salsa performance.

While “Tropical Gem” displayed the showy salsa choreography common in international salsa congress performances, the Shanghainese performance team “China Impression” offered a different choreographic strategy. Instead of pursuing an exaggerated “Latin passion”, “China Impression” performed a piece that indicated Chinese dancers are able to

dance salsa and also mark themselves as Chinese.

This piece by “China Impression” was a group dance by four paired male and female dancers. The female dancers wore red short skirts, which revealing their legs and making it easier for them to turn and spin. In contrast to these revealing skirts, they wore red tops with long sleeves, which are typically used in Chinese classical dance. The male dancers wore black clothes with a red belt. The piece began with all the female dancers dancing Chinese dance while the male dancers stood still. The female dancers retracted their arms into their long sleeves, and then released the sleeves with dedicated flourish. Their undulating waves of arms, wrists, and shoulders imitated the motion of birds flying. Chinese classical dance movements, such as turning in a windmill configuration (躍子翻身), having the arm and hand move in delicately flowing motions (擺手、柔臂), and using decorative props such as a fan, are present in their choreography.

The female dancers then step back, while the male dancers step forward. These male dancers use the directed kick, moving between martial stances. Their movements showcase sequences of Chinese kungfu (功夫) from the Beijing opera tradition. These direct, bound, firm motions align with European, North American, and Chinese notions of masculinity. All these movements were accompanied by Chinese music to evoke Chinese associations.

It was until the music switched to a salsa song that they started partner dancing. However, their synchronization was not between male and female partner, even though they were partnering. The men and the women performed highly technical partnered dance moves, such as high-speed spinning and a dramatic poses for photo- opportunities. One pairs’ movements did not show any improvisation or balanced flow between partners, but highly choreographed two individuals dancing together.

While salsa dance normally is viewed as a partner dance with movements that derive from Afro-Cuban and partnering tradition, this performance omitted these elements. The gender separation in the beginning of the piece did not permit any partnering since the dancers' bodies remained removed from one another. There was no intimacy between partners. In the latter process, the spotlight was about showing off the high techniques of performing Chinese dance with a salsa flavor.

The dancers from "China Impression" performed a Chinese dance with a quotation of salsa, but without creating intersections between salsa and Chinese classical dance. In contrast to movement vocabulary, quotation refers to the repeated use of units of any other form of movement expression. Unlike movement vocabulary, quotation can simply borrow from other forms of dances and use it as a reference, but not to produce depth of movement knowledge. In "China Impression," the dancers were citing salsa movement vocabulary. It was a Chinese dance with salsa fusion costumes and salsa gestures. The dancers were showcasing their Chinese-ness. It performed how Chinese dancers dancing salsa, and marking themselves as Chinese. This piece was about being Chinese, about auto-exoticism, and thus not at all about cosmopolitanism. This fusion dance would be a "China Impression" performs an indigenized Orientalism as it looks "oriental" at a first glance.

On the other hand, Shao's performance, *Taipei Mambo Project*, does not suggest any linkage with China. While all the other dance performances at night were mainly focused on high techniques, or about erotic encounters, Shao's piece is more focused on the group performance as a whole to convey a comfortable atmosphere of being. This being suggests a mastery of a transcendent salsa experience. As the only piece featuring a Taiwanese team, Shao's piece depicts Taiwanese salsa dancers as cosmopolitan salsa practitioners.

Shao's piece began with three male dancers in the front and three female dancers in the

back. The choreography is simple and not showy, when compared to most of the other Los Angeles salsa style performed in the showcase, where dancers would do acrobatic tricks all around the space in the dance hall and dance floor. On the movement level, African-derived movements, hip swinging, chest shimmying, torso moving, and pelvis movements were some components that Shao emphasized in his choreography. Dancers did salsa and mambo, shine routines, with their movement drawing influence from boogaloo and pchanga. These “primitive aesthetics” are not derived from real African movements, but are from the representation of African aesthetics performed in New York and Paris by African artists such as Josephine Baker. Africanist aesthetic devices, such as downward-directed energy, and percussive rupture of underlying flow, were connected with the music (piano and drums). These movements reminded the audience of salsa’s Afro-Cuban roots.



FIGURE 3.4. *Taipei Mambo Project* performed in Shanghai. Photo by I-Wen Chang.

The music in Shao’s piece was called *Rumbambola* by Noro Morales on the music album “Rumba Rhapsody,” featuring minor key tonality, simple harmonic progressions with

an improvisational approach, a moderate tempo, and acoustic instrumentation. Puerto Rican and Afro-Latin roots combined with piano playing and prominent percussion. The dancers' movements were connected with the music. It conveyed a relaxing, fun, and comfortable feeling throughout the dance. By focusing on the relationship between bodily quality and musical harmony, Shao's piece traces salsa dance back to mambo contexts.

While other performances focus mostly on having a striking appearance or style, typically by excessively using highly skilled movements and sexy outfits, Shao's choreography is simpler, focusing more on the bodily quality of mambo style of salsa. His piece, with its relaxing musical tone and Afro-Cuban movement styles, expresses a comfortable and relaxing feeling of being—perhaps as a cosmopolitan imagined “Latino” being. This casual performance makes it seem as if the performers were just enjoying the dance itself. There is no Chinese-ness performed in this piece.

In his piece, Shao does not just quote the movement styles from salsa dance; he also creates salsa movement vocabulary. Salsa is only a movement vocabulary for his choreography, not a quotation where “movement vocabulary” is the set of movements within a particular dance style. The dancers' knowing the movement is not simply being able to recognize or to use it, but to be able to produce it or be receptive to it during a dance. This, along with the comfortable and relaxing music and the Afro-Cuban movement style, moves his piece away from the “authentic” Chinese roots seen in “China Impression.” The choreography emphasizes the musicality and movements of individual dancers.

Through a consciously selected choreographic choice, Shao's dancers are performing inauthenticity by dancing salsa as if they are Latino people and enjoy their cosmopolitan Latin being by mastering of the foreign form and Latino gestures, knowledgeable about Westernized salsa songs, polished, and cheerful all at once. These Taiwanese dancers play

with the cosmopolitan Latin culture. Shao's dancers identify themselves as cosmopolitan salsa dancers. Mimicry appears when the colonized imitate and take on the culture of the colonizers, as "almost the same, but not quite (Bhabha, 1994)." Mimicry, as showed in this piece, becomes part of Taiwanese salsa's national character. Through the practice of the "Other" body and by mastering this foreign dance form, these Taiwanese salsa practitioners challenge governmental definitions of social identity— the international lack of recognition of Taiwan— in the international salsa events by performing mastery of Latin salsa as a Taiwanese team.

These Taiwanese salsa practitioners construct an oppositional, yet 'inauthentic,' Taiwanese identity through salsa practice as a critical trope against the power of nation-state forms through a cosmopolitan salsa setting. In this sense, the dance movement in salsa refuses a simplified gesture of the encounter between two partners. Their global salsa movements challenge the definition of framed nation-state boundaries, creating not just oneself and another, but a third space, "a reciprocal body-space that challenges the limits of body self and self as other (Manning , 2007: 52)." This body is the potential site of identity negotiation.

In addition, the programming of this showcase listed all the teams' names according to their nationality. Interestingly, while all the teams not from China were listed under their nationality (only the team from China were listed under the city name), Shao's *Taipei Mambo Project* was listed as from Taiwan. This might suggest that the organizer consider Taiwan as a nation and not part of China. Moreover, right before they performed, Shao's team was introduced as a dance team from the beautiful island of Taiwan (instead of from "Chinese

Taipei”).¹⁰⁷ In many official and unofficial international events, Taiwan as a name is being banned due to political pressure from the Chinese government.¹⁰⁸ In contrast, the introduction of Shao’s team as “from Taiwan” in an international Shanghai salsa event was certainly a friendly welcome that could possibly only have taken place in this cosmopolitan salsa setting.

Global Citizenship in Taiwanese Salsa Travel

To be cosmopolitan involves meeting people from many different countries and having an exciting and glamorous character associated with travel. Salsa provides these cosmopolitan qualities for its practitioners. By attending international salsa congresses and events abroad, salsa practitioners are able to travel abroad and embody global citizenship in the process. Salsa promoter Albert Torres is a good example of someone who lives the lifestyle of the global citizen. He travels 48 weeks out of the year, totaling between 300,000 and 350,000 miles, to attend salsa related activities around the world.¹⁰⁹

Traveling abroad suggests a cosmopolitan life style. Traveling globally allows one to acquire a cosmopolitan identity. Salsa practitioners in Taiwan have the ability to travel around the world and make global connections through salsa. Most of the salsa practitioners I interviewed in Taiwan mention how salsa helps them to make connections with international friends. In what follows, I illustrate examples of people who benefit from salsa travel, and why that’s important for Taiwanese in particular.

¹⁰⁷ Chinese Taipei is a name Taiwan used under the threatening of China in attending many international events, such as WTO and the Olympic games.

¹⁰⁸ For example, the recent conference in Portugal of the European Association for Chinese Studies (EACS) that began on 23 July 2014 the conference organizers in the University of Minho and Coimbra University, a Chinese government funded institution censor the contents of conference materials and interference in the internal organization of the international conference of an independent and democratically organized non-profitable academic organization to against Taiwan. See also: <http://www.chinesestudies.eu/index.php/433-letter-of-protest-at-interference-in-eacs-conference-in-portugal-july-2014>

¹⁰⁹ Based on my phone interview with Albert Torres on August 26th, 2014 in Los Angeles.

Taiwanese salsa practitioners not only perform their cosmopolitan global citizenship on stage, but also embody this global citizenship in their dance life. James Wang, a Taiwanese salsa instructor, provides a good example of how to use salsa as a way to situate oneself in the world. In 2008 and 2009, Wang spent seven months traveling and dancing in Korea, India, Finland, England, Spain, France, Egypt, Brazil, Peru, Ecuador, Dominican Republic, Cuba, Japan, Hong Kong, and the USA. This salsa trip in 2008-2009 became his first time to backpack around the world. He claimed that, “*I want to see the world through salsa dance*” in his Facebook notes and blog. Wang later posted all his travel photos along with his travel writing on his blog. This trip, according to Wang, opened his eyes toward an understanding of the world in relation to Taiwan.

Wang’s salsa travel experience needs to be examined in the context of Taiwanese history that resulted in anxieties over Taiwanese national identity. In addition, Wang’s travels need to be examined from the current social change, which began with the lifting of martial law in 1987. Taiwanese people lived under martial law for a long time (1949-1987), during which their awareness of international affairs was constrained. When martial law was lifted in 1987, Taiwanese people started to make physical connections with foreigners.¹¹⁰ For generations who grew up under martial law, to go abroad was something that used to be impossible but had become possible. Since Taiwan was stuck in the past in this regard, and is an Asian orphan internationally, it is important for Taiwanese to make international connections, such as by going abroad, seeing the world, and being seen by the rest of the world.

Although James Wang majored in International Business during his undergraduate studies at the National Taiwan University (the best ranked university in Taiwan), he claimed

¹¹⁰ During the martial law era, only authorized Taiwanese were able to travel abroad, including artists who “perform properly”. Traveling abroad thus is a symbol of being privileged. Even with the lifting of martial law, traveling abroad is still a class-based privilege.

that he “has not ‘seen’ the world through his eyes yet...and, salsa gives me an excuse to do so.”¹¹¹ Additionally, Calvin Wang, another salsa instructor in Taiwan who has participated in salsa travel abroad, recalls the excitement of dancing well as a Taiwanese person in international events. In 2010, Calvin Wang went to the Hong Kong salsa festival, an event he describes as “opening his eyes.”¹¹² Since then, he has frequently traveled abroad to attend salsa events, including those in Singapore, Malaysia, New York, and Boston. “I could go abroad for a business trip and at the same time attend salsa events. Normally I travel abroad and attend salsa events about three to four times a year,” he said.¹¹³

Traveling abroad also allows Taiwanese practitioners to get recognition from the outsider. Calvin Wang recalled that at international salsa events Taiwanese are sometimes too shy. However, “if you do know how to dance, then other people will dance with you,” he said with a confident facial expression, “and then, you can proudly tell others that you are from Taiwan!” Calvin Wang said that if you can improve your dance skills, then people would recognize you, and treat you well. By doing so, Calvin Wang is able to make international friends.

Amanda Sun, a tourist agent who has studied salsa for more than four years, expressed these feelings with excitement to me: “Now in my Facebook, there are more than 300 salsa friends from around the world.”¹¹⁴ These “salsa friends,” according to Sun, are the salsa practitioners she met around the world during international salsa events. As a white-collar office worker, even though she works in the tourism industry, she does not have many opportunities to make friends with foreigners. However, as a salsa practitioner, she is able to

¹¹¹ Based on my interview with James Wang on 6/28/2012, in Taipei, Taiwan.

¹¹² Based on my interview with Calvin Wang on 9/13/2013, in Taipei, Taiwan.

¹¹³ Based on my interview with Calvin Wang on 9/13/2013, in Taipei, Taiwan.

¹¹⁴ Based on my interview with Amanda Sun on 8/25/2013 in Taipei, Taiwan.

travel around the world, making contact with local salsa lovers, and hanging out with them.

Space, Movement, Identity: Cosmopolitanism in Formosa Salsa Fiesta

In *Kinesthetic City: Dance and Movement in Chinese Urban Spaces*, dance scholar SanSan Kwan focuses on kinesthesia—the body's awareness of motion—to investigate the importance of motion in the determination of space. Instead of behaving as a flâneur (a term borrowed from Walter Benjamin) and documenting the city through an objectifying male gaze, Kwan utilizes Lena Hammergren's notion of the flâneuse – the subject who experiences the city through her body – to describe the experience of participating in and responding to the urban terrain's kinaesthetic flows (Kwan, 2013). In other words, there is a reflexive and participatory relationship of the dancing body to urban spaces.



FIGURE 3.5. Advertisements of Taipei Salsa Fiesta.

Taipei, in Kwan's analysis, offers an example of a city shaped by ambiguity, the city has gone through a gradual and constant re-negotiation of its identity.¹¹⁵ Taipei has simultaneously positioned itself so as to assert its Chinese-ness (the Nationalist government in Taiwan did not disavow its claim to rule mainland China up until the 70s) while at the same time the city has been increasingly anxious to cultivate a uniquely Taiwanese identity. This tension between two modes of nationalism, as discussed previously in this chapter, forms the essence of Taiwanese cultural and political life today.

Dance offers a space where identities in cities can be embodied and explored. Architecture theorist Stavros Stavrides proposes the idea that movements, such as walking and watching in a space, create "threshold spaces" that offer opportunities for new relations, rather than fortify standard orders of dissociation and hierarchy. He believes that "thresholds mark occasions, opportunities for change. Thresholds create or symbolically represent passages toward a possible future, already existing in the past (Stavrides, 2007: 177)".

Extending his assertion, I argue that the dance movements have a more powerful and effective influence on how citizens challenge hierarchy, and create a space for their own usage. Space is *in* motion. Space is continuously constituted and created through different kinds of movements. In the field of human and cultural geography, scholars have theorized a geographical imaginary to indicate collective visions or narratives about the contested cultural meanings in particular spaces, and political-economic worldviews that order cities, regions, and nations in a capitalist and colonialist sense (Soja, 1996; Harvey, 1990; Massey, 2007; Candelario, 2011). From this perspective, salsa dance in Taipei engages with the public space of democracy, exclusion, and political agenda. Thus, a national identity can be formed

¹¹⁵ Historically, the Chinese nationalist government in exile after the Chinese civil war intended to settle in Taipei as a temporary capital city.

from the idiosyncratic kinesthetic movements of Taipei city itself.

In 2014, Larry Shao organized the Taipei Salsa Fiesta in Taiwan. This was a three day event, including four social parties, six workshops, and more than ten performances. The event hosted international dancers, instructors, and DJs from Taiwan, Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, and other parts of the world. Shao made a promotion video for the 2014 Formosa Salsa Fiesta on YouTube. In the video, dancers were shown dancing in front of famous Taipei tourists sites, including the Longshan Temple, Taipei 101 (which used to be the tallest building in the world), President Hall (the old Japanese colonial building), Chiang Kai-Shek Memorial Hall, an escalator in a fancy department store, the old town district, the Taipei main train station, the Metro underground, and the famous Taipei night market.

All these places indicate a unique history of landmarks in Taiwan. For example, the Chiang Kai-Shek Memorial Hall is a monument, landmark, and tourist attraction in Taipei that was built to memorialize Chiang Kai-shek,¹¹⁶ former president of the Republic of China. Chiang's rule was later considered a dictatorship under the contemporary interpretation. He was also responsible for the 228 Incident in 1947, a violent suppression that resulted in the massacre of between 10,000 and 30,000 civilians. The Chiang Kai-Shek Memorial Hall is thus controversial due to Chiang's ruling history in Taiwan. Since the 1990s, there have been several student movements occurring at the site. The site's importance in the development of Taiwan's democracy led to the plaza's re-dedication as Liberty Square (自由廣場) in 2007.

As governmental buildings, these halls and squares used to represent a highly secured

¹¹⁶ Chiang was the leader of the Chinese nationalists who occupied Taiwan after World War Two. The government in Taiwan under Chiang's rule was a one-party state, consisting almost completely of mainlanders from China. Seeking to promote Taiwan as the sole and only authentic Chinese country in the world, Chiang's government actively suppressed local cultural expression, even forbidding the use of local languages.

political and official architectural environment. For example, in Chiang Kai-Shek Memorial Hall, the statue of Chiang Kai-shek is guarded heavily by the military, with each guard shift standing perfectly still for an hour. This performance by the honor guards of the Republic of China Armed Forces takes place in the square regularly, and the guard mounting ceremony takes place in regular intervals in the main hall, where a large statue of Chiang Kai-shek is located. These performances feature a serious military and the discipline of a state power, making those places political and hierarchical.

In Shao's video, the dancers transform the typical Chinese governmental landmarks—such as President Hall and most notably Chiang Kai-Shek Memorial Hall— into an urban salsa platform. All the dancers occupy the space without hesitation, dancing with confidence in those public arenas. They dance to show how this inauthentic foreign dance form can fit into Taipei's architecture, and demonstrate their rights to transform the atmosphere in these venues. Public space is the common ground where civility and our collective sense of what may be called 'publicness' are developed and expressed (Francis, 1989: 149). Public space is an arena of citizen discourses and association. Shao's dancers occupy these famous tourist sites to make Taipei a hot spot of globalized salsa tourism, while at the same time dancing their rights in state-formed authoritative locations.

Dancing as challenging the meaning of political venues demonstrates Taipei as a liberal and modern city that allows salsa dancers to dance next to official and governmental institutions. Since the dancers are occupying the space that is originally not designed for dance, their movements make a meaningful statement. This video legitimates the representations of salsa as a cosmopolitan cultural product within the Taiwan tourism industry. That is, the video positions Taiwan as a globalized salsa city, and at the same time adds "local favor" into the city, thus showing Taiwan to be a multicultural democracy. It

invites salsa lovers around the world to appreciate Taiwan while dancing.

This video, however, still shows the exotic encounter between Taiwan and Latin culture. Dance theorist Marta Savigliano argues that tango's exotic/exoticized representations are constructed to fit into a First World desire for passion within the context of the "colonizing gaze" (Savigliano, 1995). The Taiwanese bodily displays shown in the video indicate a non-Latino but still exotic salsa practiced in a far away foreign land. In doing so, Taiwanese can be seen as part of the global salsa trend. Similar to Shih's concept of "cultural inauthenticity," this tactical position of dancing salsa in Taiwan's tourist sites is how Taiwan promotes itself to the world. Dancing salsa in the famous tourist sites makes Taiwan a perfect destination for foreign tourists, as it is urban and cosmopolitan, while at the same time tropical and exotic.

The Economy of Salsa Tourism

Both commercial influence and the concept of friendly intimacy facilitate salsa's popularity in global circulation. Salsa today is clearly a commodity, being sold through dance lessons, videos, recordings, classes, parties, and vacation packages. Salsa has been promoted and commercialized as a certain attitude, and a way of life. It is a lifestyle that encouraging a welcoming and friendly environment that is both passionate, and relaxing. This attitude has been spread around the world by the globalization of salsa.

During my interviews with various Taiwanese salsa practitioners who danced abroad, one interviewee mentioned that in Korea, Taiwanese dancers dance with foreign dancers till 4am, and then eat breakfast together. "It is like we are in the same family," a interviewee emphasized. By engaging in the local salsa community, they are able to become a highly flexible person that has the ability to access different places around the world through salsa.

The friendliness in salsa may come from salsa's street roots and tradition of welcoming

people to participate. Although salsa was born from music industry, it became a street music. This kind of hospitality in street salsa also comes from salsa's international networking system. All salsa congresses involve varying degrees of salsa networking capitalism. By this I mean that any successful international salsa event is operated and organized by local salsa promoters who network with foreign promoters in order to create a functioning event. These salsa promoters support each other both domestically and abroad in a mutually beneficial way. By doing so, they create a cosmopolitan salsa world that entices salsa lovers from around the globe to travel, take lessons, and buy salsa related products. Most salsa practitioners mention the "equal treatment" that exists among salsa organizers. That is, the local salsa event organizers will take care of the foreign salsa visitors, and expect that other salsa organizers around the will would take care of theirs as well when needed. This creates a reciprocal system of networked exchanges that works collectively to guarantee that the best salsa revenue can be generated in multiple locations, thus allowing a diverse array of international salsa congresses to thrive.

Although salsa is promoted by an international salsa network, there are still many different social and cultural factors that matter in the making of the salsa tourism industry in each specific context. For example, although most of the international salsa events are held by private organizations (mostly dance studios), the Singapore government has funded the salsa events in Singapore in order to increase the visibility of the country itself. In addition, in the advertisements of the 2013 China Salsa Congress and the 2014 Formosa Salsa Fiesta, dancers are shown dancing at famous tourist sites, such as the great wall and night markets, a marketing strategy that merges local icons with this international trend. In another example, in my interview with James Want, he describes the use of salsa in Egypt as an outlet for women, who typically dress conservative, to act and dress sexy at the salsa clubs at night. In

India, James Wang learned that salsa practitioners are from the uppermost class, and only those people who can take a private chauffeur to and from the clubs have the privilege to dance.

Salsa offers liberation from local conventions. However, accessibility to salsa is often a class-based privilege. In Taiwan, class also plays an important role in the salsa scene. Due to the comparatively high costs involved in learning salsa and attending salsa clubs, salsa club goers in Taiwan tend to be young, middle-class professionals with leisure time and extra money. Therefore, the salsa dance club remains a territory for the upper middle class, beyond the reach of Taipei working class people. The furnishing of the dance floor itself is a microcosmic dream world of urban life, and it serves the people who can afford it by allowing disengagement from their living urban environment into a safe place of pseudo-reality. All in all, globalized salsa provides Taiwanese practitioners with an opportunity to redefine a concept of self as cosmopolitan and highly mobile, but at the same time it is problematically tied to a dream of liberation through social ascendancy.

The Taiwanese cosmopolitan salsa scene requires a social membership that ties to class privilege. The 2014 Taiwanese international event, Formosa Salsa Fiesta, was held in the American Club Taipei (ACC, 美僑俱樂部), which was established in 1968 to serve the international community. The club's current, spacious building was once an American military club that was used for more than four decades as an entertainment site for U.S. forces. The club offers fitness, sports, dining, banquets, and various activities for American and International guests. The club originally allowed only U.S. citizens to join, but it now also accepts non-US members, though recommendations from two American members are required. Moreover, the membership fee to join this club is an extremely expensive \$10,170

USD, making it an upper class club that most of the Taiwanese populace cannot attend.¹¹⁷

Unlike in Los Angeles, where salsa practitioners are mainly Latino immigrants and the working class, Taiwanese salsa practitioners are mostly well-educated and middle to upper class. It is not a coincidence that both James Wang and Calvin Wang graduated from Taiwan National University (NTU), which is a “star” or “first ranked” university (明星學校、第一志願) in Taiwan. The students who study at NTU are mostly from Taipei (more than half of the students at NTU are from the capital city) with a better educational and family background. Their parents are better educated and richer compared to the rest of the country.¹¹⁸ NTU also has the highest rate of students who study abroad after graduation amongst other universities in Taiwan.

These entertainment spaces are not just a place of dance, but also function as salons where young professionals can gather together to present and share information on a wide range of social, intellectual and political issues. The 'salon' of the salsa class makes exclusive a politicized space of bodies. By making a space to negotiate social body politics in the salsa “salon,” the everyday expression of bodies on the streets is depoliticized in an inverse action of class-defined political realms.

In light of the above analysis, one sees that dance floors are not complete spaces of urban utopia, as the possibility of making this cosmopolitan connection is limited to the means of doing so. While congresses may create an imagined community that is ethnically inclusive, it is an inclusivity that contains little class diversity. That is, cities of

¹¹⁷ Interestingly, when I interviewed Yang Changxiong, the pioneer who introduced and promoted ballroom dance in Taiwan under martial law, he also mentioned that he taught partner dancing in the American Club Taipei. Therefore the police did not turn him down. It looks like this “foreign” and “elite” territory also has the privilege to break the rules.

¹¹⁸ See studies of NTU students components: Luoh, Ming-Ching (駱明慶). “誰是台大學生? — 性別、省籍與城鄉差異,” *Taiwan Economic Review*, 30 : 1 (Mar 2002).

cosmopolitanism often note the tendencies of cosmopolitans to omit class divisions and inequalities in their imagining of the idealized coexistences of cultures (Hutchinson, 2014:12).

Westernized Salsa in Asia



FIGURE 3.6. “Brown Sugar”: a Westernized salsa bar with live band in Taipei. Photo by I-Wen Chang.

Salsa in Taiwan is perceived as a foreign dance and music from the West. The first generations of salsa practitioners in Taiwan are those who studied abroad or lived abroad. Some of them learned salsa from mass media, which is operated mostly by the US. For example, Chu, the organizer of 2014 SalsaMemucho, was born in Taiwan but lives, works, and studies abroad. Nevertheless, Chu is from a high ranking political family. Social dances are part of Cho's parent's social life.¹¹⁹ There is a linkage between social elites and the accessibility to social dance.

Both James Wang and Calvin Wang started salsa dancing under the influence of American culture. James Wang watched the movies *Shall We Dance* (2004) and *Dirty Dancing: Havana Nights* (2004); the "passionate dancing" therein attracted his attention and in 2006, Wang started to learn salsa under the influence of American mass media's depiction of salsa. Similarly, when Calvin Wang served in the army in Taichung City in Taiwan, he started to go to the salsa bars in the region. Interestingly, Taichung City used to be one of the areas for the American Military Assistance Advisory Group to stay during the 1950s and 1970s. That is why there is an extensive nightlife scene and many bars, as the area used to serve the American soldiers.¹²⁰

Salsa in the context of Taiwan is already internationally popularized through a somewhat "Westernized flavor." That is, Taiwanese salsa dance does not only have Latin American roots, but is more of a US creation and promotion. In this sense, salsa can also be understood

¹¹⁹ Interestingly, Larry Shao's parents and Chu's parents were best friends when they were young. This might indicate that the family background, from an upper class family, plays an important role in the cosmopolitan setting and the possible interests of salsa.

¹²⁰ Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) is a designation for American military advisers sent to other countries to assist in the training of conventional armed forces and facilitate military aid. Although numerous MAAG's operated around the world throughout the 1940s-1970's, the most famous MAAG's were those active in Southeast Asia before and during the Vietnam War. In Taiwan, U.S. Military Advisory Group generally refers to the United States Armed Forces in the Republic of China (Taiwan) from April 1951 to December 1978. This is a history of American colonialism in Taiwan. Many forms of American culture and nightlife, as well as prostitution, appeared during this time to serve the American soldiers.



FIGURE 3.7. A salsa dancing night at “Brass Monkey” salsa bar in Taipei.
Photo by I-Wen Chang.

as engaging the dominant form of cultural capitalism in an age of expanding cosmopolitan globalization in East Asia. In the Taiwanese context, however, due to a lack of Latin immigrants and spatial immediacy to everyday Latin-ness, people experience Latin-ness only through mass-media that is dominated by a western gaze on Otherness. This process is similar to what performance theorist Joseph Roach calls as “surrogation,” which involves not the replay of an authentic, grounding roots, but a potential of constructing that roots as a rhetorically powerful effect of performance. It is a repetition with revision (Roach, 1996). In this sense, salsa is exoticized by the West, and this Westernized salsa is carried on to other non-Western locations, in this case Taiwan. Salsa, once globalized, stands in, through its foreignness, for whiteness or ‘Westernness’ in Taiwan.

Non-salsa night clubs in Taiwan are often regarded as sleazy or associated with

immorality.¹²¹ Attending salsa bars, however, because it requires dancers to learn techniques, is often considered more “healthy.” Salsa is a professional dance. It has become a fashionable form of urban culture. Here we can see that partner dance bends the rules as it evokes sexual desire without acting on it. As a “civilized” dance, salsa allows Taiwanese dancers to express and perform an appropriate exotic desire.

In addition, in salsa bars, the practitioners are able to meet foreigners with the same interests (dancing salsa), and enjoy a cosmopolitan salsa setting to be a global salsa participants. In Taiwan, salsa’s exoticism actually leads to real-life connections with “the exotic” (the foreign). Salsa provides a way for dancers to make exotic connections and imaginings that they would not be able to enjoy in their ordinary life. It seems that Taiwanese salsa practitioners see salsa as exotic and this play with the exotic reinforces their status as global citizens and gives them permission to express erotic desire. By claiming access to salsa, they also perform a first-world status economically. These Taiwanese salsa practitioners are using their exoticism to contend with a complex set of circumstances.

Globalized salsa is characterized by multiple layers of exoticism and self-representation, especially in the case of Taiwan. There is a level on which Taiwanese salsa dancers are performing ‘Westernness’ and “Latino passion” by claiming the right to exoticize a foreign Other. By doing so, these Taiwanese salsa practitioners can get away from restrictive traditions and embrace a foreign culture. They claim a first-world position by dancing globalized salsa, which probably links to the economic position of Taiwan globally. Through

¹²¹ In Taiwan, it is considered immoral to go to night clubs, especially for woman. There is a term called “pick up bodies (撿屍體)” in Taiwan, meaning that guys go to night clubs to find extremely drunk women, bringing them home and raping them. The general public normally blames the woman for her immorality, suggesting that she deserved what happened to her. Inversely there is no blame on the man’s side. This shows that in Taiwan it is still a patriarchal society where gender equality does not 100% exist, with harmful gender norms still in place. This creates a situation where even the legal system does not support these women who go to night clubs.

a classed-based privilege, these Taiwanese salsa practitioners are able to make international connections with their foreign friends and construct their cosmopolitan self as a global citizen.

Cosmopolitan Salsa Inventions

Anthropologist Ulf Hannerz argues that cosmopolitans depend on the locals in order to conceive themselves as cosmopolitans, and to be identified as such (Hannerz: 1990). Along similar lines, the cosmopolitanism in salsa can be examined not only from the international salsa congresses, but also through local salsa inventions. In places like Japan and Taiwan, local salsa inventions would only be created with the influence of cosmopolitanism in salsa. The local practitioners respond to a globalized salsa by creating their own version of salsa music and/or art works. However, it is because there is an inauthenticity that is embodied in salsa that allows these creators to find ways to negotiate their own ideas through salsa inventions. These examples illustrate that cosmopolitanism allies itself with localism.

Japanese Salsa Invention: Salsa Band *Orquesta de la Luz*

*La gente me dice que soy loco por ser
salsero.*

*Estoy tan enamorado,
de esta música tan preciosa,
que nació de las bellezas
de las perlas caribeñas.*

*Yo no tengo otro remedio cuando comienzo a
escucharla.*

*Y retumba la tumbadora.
Y retinba la campanita.
Se me alborota la sangre
y me dan ganas de bailar.*

*Celia Cruz me enseñó.
LA SALSA ES MI ENERGIA.
Nací en el oriente.*

*LA SALSA ES MI ENERGIA.
Pero me gusta, ay, esta música caliente.
LA SALSA ES MI ENERGIA.
Que se llama salsa, salsa, salsa.*

*La gente me dice que soy loco por ser
salsero.*

*Estoy tan enamorado,
de esta música tan preciosa,
que nació de las bellezas
de las perlas caribeñas.*

*Yo no tengo otro remedio cuando comienzo a
escucharla.*

*Y retumba la tumbadora.
Y retinba la campanita.
Se me alborota la sangre
y me dan ganas de bailar.*

*Celia Cruz me enseñó.
LA SALSA ES MI ENERGIA.
Nací en el oriente.*

*LA SALSA ES MI ENERGIA.
Pero me gusta, ay, esta música caliente.
LA SALSA ES MI ENERGIA.
Que se llama salsa, salsa, salsa.*

*People tell me I'm crazy for being salsero.
I 'm so in love,*

*With this very beautiful music
Born of beauty
Pearl of the Caribbean .
I have no choice when I start to listen.
And rumbles the tumbler.*

*And rings the bell.
It excites my blood
and makes me want to dance.*

*Celia Cruz taught me.
Salsa IS MY ENERGY.
I was born in the east.
Salsa IS MY ENERGY.
But I like, oh, this hot music.
SALSA IS MY ENERGY.
Is called salsa, salsa, salsa.*

*People tell me I'm crazy for being salsero.
I 'm so in love,*

*With this very beautiful music
Born of beauty
Pearl of the Caribbean .*

*I have no choice when I start to listen.
And rumbles the tumbler.
And rings the bell.*

*It excites my blood
and makes me want to dance.*

*Celia Cruz taught me.
Salsa IS MY ENERGY.
I was born in the east.
Salsa IS MY ENERGY.
But I like, oh, this hot music.
SALSA IS MY ENERGY.
Is called salsa, salsa, salsa.*

Lyrics of “Salsa Es Mi Energia” in Japanese salsa band Orquesta de la Luz’s album
Salsa no tiene frontera (salsa has no border)

The worldwide interest reflects salsa’s status as a transnational cultural practice. As the Japanese salsa band lyric suggests, salsa is popular in countries even in far East Asia.

Although Latin culture is very different from the culture in East Asia, salsa offers these East Asian practitioners a new way to express themselves through Caribbean music and dance.

What is the magic that allows salsa to attract practitioners from beyond its original geographical, mental, emotional, and political locations? What makes salsa so attractive to practitioners from various cultural backgrounds?

On stage, the fair-skinned singer moved comfortably with the rhythm of the salsa song. This female singer, named Nora, wore a short sparkling dress and sang the song in Spanish. The live band played the music while moving their bodies to the salsa rhythm. Dancers around the band were dancing salsa with excitement. The audience in front of the stage were cheering and moving comfortably with the music. Singers, musicians, and dancers performed as if there were Latin American people, suggesting that they are masters of this foreign music dance form. However, this is not a scene in Cali, Mexico City, San Juan, Bogotá, or New York. The scene took place in Tokyo, and the audience, the musicians, the dancers, and the singers were all Japanese.

Nora’s singing and dancing performance video can still be viewed on Youtube. This scene surprises and impresses many audiences who watch the video. It is surprising not so much that they are performing Latin-ness, but that they are doing so credibly in an international arena. They sing songs in both Spanish and English, and singing songs in English has offered a different avenue for the production of international salsa. In 1990, Orquesta de la Luz, with their vocalist Nora singing in Spanish, burst onto the salsa scene in

both Japan and the Americas. This Japanese salsa band is well-known in Puerto Rico, Perú and other Latin American countries, providing evidence of a salsa-as-global discourse. The popularity of Orquesta de la Luz illustrates how non Latino salsa practitioners engage with an imaginary global identity.

In 1991, Orquesta de la Luz's music album was released; it was named *Salsa no tiene fronteras* (*Salsa Has No Border*). The lyrics in the song "Salsa Caliente del Japon (Salsa Caliente from Japan)" express their passion for bringing a Japanese salsa band to the world:

*Déjame presentar al grupo mío
todos los miembros son chéveres,
aunque ellos son todos japoneses,
pero tocan la salsa sabrosa.*

*Let me present to my group
all members are Nifty ,
although they are all Japanese ,
but touch the salsa taste.*

*No importa de donde sean,
ellos pueden tocar y bailar;
no importa de donde sean,
ellos tienen ritmo y corazón.*

*No matter where they are ,
they can play and dance ;
no matter where they are ,
they have rhythm and heart.*

*Salsa caliente del Japón, qué bueno pa'
gozar.
Tocamos la salsa y la rumba sabrosa.
Bailen, bailen, bailen, (Qué bueno pa'
gozar)
bailen, bailen, bailen, bailen, bailen
conmigo (Qué bueno pa' gozar)
bueno pa' gozar; (Qué bueno pa' gozar)
bueno pa' vacilar. (Qué bueno pa' gozar)
A Puerto Rico y Panamá (Qué bueno pa'
gozar)
y dominicanos, (Qué bueno pa' gozar)
a todo latinoamericano. (Qué bueno pa'
gozar)
Salsa sabrosa, (Qué bueno pa' gozar),
rumba buena, (Qué bueno pa' gozar)
Salsa caliente del Japón. (Qué bueno pa'
gozar)*

*Hot Salsa of Japan , how good to enjoy.
We play salsa and rumba tasty
Dance , dance , dance , (How good to
enjoy)
dance , dance , dance , dance , dance with
me (so good to enjoy)
good to enjoy (How good to enjoy)
good to hesitate. (How good to enjoy)
To Puerto Rico and Panama (How good to
enjoy)
and Dominicans (How good to enjoy)
to all Latin America . (How good to enjoy)
Tasty Salsa (How good to enjoy)
good rumba (How good to enjoy)
Hot Salsa of Japan. (How good to enjoy)*



FIGURE 3.8. The cover of the music album “Salsa Caliente del Japon.” There is an indication of exoticized Japanese people’s encounter with Latin people.

From the music lyrics to the music album cover, Orquesta de la Luz demonstrates the “Japanese-ness” in their creation of salsa. In her salsa lyrics, Nora sings a song of how she as a Japanese person enjoys the hot passion of salsa. In their music album cover, there is one bare chested Japanese man playing drums—suggesting a linkage through percussion to Japanese Taiko. The words on the cover, “Hot salsa from Japan,” indicate an exotic (Japanese) encounter with something else exotic (Latin). Nora sings a song of salsa that is from Latin roots but is celebrated by non-Latinos. Although members of the band are from Japan, they embrace hot salsa dance and music. In order to distinguish themselves, Japanese salsa musicians, from mainstream salsa popular music abroad, the band chooses to play as thoroughly an authentic salsa sound as possible, while distinguishing themselves from Latino bands through self-orientalized lyrics (Hosokawa, 1999, cited by Waxer, 2002: 298).

For one Japanese reviewer, the popularity of Orquesta de la Luz around the world reveals “a shift” (in the history of salsa in Japan) from “salsa of Latino, by Latino, and for Latinos, to a globalism originating from Japan.”¹²² The popularity of Orquesta de la Luz

¹²² Kihara, Tambo. 1993. “Orquesta de la Luz.” *Latina*, December.

depoliticizes salsa's roots for the purpose of international reception. This celebration of foreign culture is central to the band's popularity in Japan because it allows Japanese fans to participate in a global salsa village (Hosokawa, 1999, cited by Waxer, 2002: 294-295).

Salsa enables a sense of being without roots,¹²³ and allows the Japanese to alienate themselves from the continuity of Japanese tradition. In Japan, there is a common ideology that the industrial and economical structuring of Japan is inferior to the West in terms of the modernization process (Hosokawa, 1999). To counter this perceived traditional inferiority, salsa allows Orquesta de la Luz to show their global-ness and thus escape their Japanese identity. This Japanese salsa music that is popular in the Americas reflects the politics of Japan: getting rid of its past history and embracing globalization. This concept of being without roots and allowing alienation from the continuity of tradition is useful and important in my theorizing of salsa.

In the global salsa environment, the tendency to ignore the origins of salsa, but pursue a broader acceptance of its forms around the world, is important to Asian salsa practitioners. Salsa is popular in both Japan and Taiwan. Despite the adversarial histories of Taiwan and Japan, these countries share a vexed relationship to history and tradition. Salsa in Japan illustrates the Japanese needs to celebrate foreignness and global-ness to escape their Japanese identity; salsa in Taiwan stands as a way of deemphasizing the central position of state political discourse in articulating identity.

Taiwanese Salsa Invention: Salsa in Art Works and Fusion Music

Taiwanese artists localize salsa and other Latino cultures within the Taiwanese context. I

¹²³ Salsa is a transnational and transcultural dance form that has traveled from the Americas to many other countries and taken on diverse meanings among its participants. Thus, salsa is a malleable dance form onto which everyone who practices it can add their own 'spice.' It is a dance that best illustrates the contemporary phenomenon of the mixture of culture concomitantly with the cultural problematic of notions of roots.

analyze Larry Shao's *The World's First Nachata* and Tito Tang (湯宇歆)'s music album *Antipodes* (兩個世界) as examples of how Latino music and dance allows a different Taiwanese-ness and how Taiwanese dancers make exotic connections and imaginings in their everyday lives to pursue a global citizenship through salsa.

As both a salsa instructor and fine art artist, Larry Shao did several contemporary arts experiments with salsa. One of Shao's 2012 salsa art works is called *The World's First Nachata*. It is a video installation about a new music style of song "nachata" that Shao created. It illustrates a combination of the Latin dance music bachata and the non-mainstream local culture of natashi in Taiwan. It highlights the cultural similarities between Taiwan and the Dominican Republic through a hybrid song. This "nachata" song illustrates the globalized nature of Latin dance forms localized in the context of Taiwan.



FIGURE 3.9. Flyer of Larry Shao's solo exhibition

In this video installation, Shao describes the reason why he wants to create this Latin inspired Taiwanese music: when Shao went back to Taiwan from the US, he was so surprised to realize that the Dominican dance music—bachata, normally performed and danced along with salsa music in the Latin dance clubs— is very popular in Taiwan. Since this dance form is hyper erotic even in the Western society, Shao is surprised that bachata dance would gain such popularity and acceptance in Taiwan. Therefore, Shao decides to give his own answer of why bachata is popular in Taiwan through his work *The World's First Nachata*.

Bachata is a form of music and dance that originated in the countryside and rural marginal neighborhoods of Dominican Republic. Originating in the context of working class dancehalls, bachata was seldom played on radio and almost never mentioned on TV in the Dominican Republic. Effectively barred from high society venues, bachata lovers moved to bars and brothels in the poorest neighborhoods. The music is often about sex, despair, and hardship of life. The story telling in the bachata lyric is often romantic and is especially prevalent of heartbreak and sadness tales. It is also referred to as a bitter music. Lower class culture influence this form of dance (Hernandez, 1995).

In terms of dance style, bachata has erotic and “sticky” dance movements. It emphasizes the total trust of the dance partner and thus provides a more close and intimate with each other. The music of bachata is slower than salsa thus provides a more relaxing and sensual feeling. Compared to salsa, bachata is more erotic and allows for an even greater intimacy between the two partners. The dancer initiates the movements of the dance from his or her hip and pelvis, from where the partners will support each other from this point. Dancers move side by side, not back and forth as in salsa. While partners still keep a distance to each other through a frame in salsa, there is no space between the two partners in bachata. This pelvis-oriented dance allows dancers to press up against each other. With a lot of twisting, body

waving, and circulating motions, the two bodies are always acting as one in bachata. While the dancers' pelvises are connected, their torsos are waving. The male dancer can slowly dip her, and she bends her chest accordingly. He sways her, and their bodies match each other. The movement in bachata is smooth, continuous, even, and sleek. The closeness of the two partners results in a more sensual and erotic quality.

The World's First Nachata, according to Shao's artistic statement, is his attempt at explaining why bachata gained such popularity in a comparatively conservative society like Taiwan. Shao believes that the bachata music style, rhythm, and lyrics are similar to a Taiwanese local and marginalized music genre called natashi, and therefore is more easily accessible by the Taiwanese audience. Shao points out that "Nakashi, [is] a kind of traditional Taiwanese music. This word is taken from 'Nakashi' which means 'flow' in Japanese. Nakashi came from Beitou (北投), a northern outpost of Taipei that sets up as a leisure area for Japanese colonial forces in the pre-World War II era that continued its function as an area for prostitution after World War II for US military, Japanese tourists, and Taiwanese."¹²⁴ Both vocally and instrumentally, bachata and nakashi have a rustic feel and the similarities with the lower class daily labor, and sad and bitter lyrical content. Shao therefore decided to make a Taiwanese bachata song called "nachata," in which he picked a bachata song, adjusted the musical instruments to Taiwanese traditional ones (nakashi), wrote lyrics in Taiwanese, finally had nakashi musician play and record it.

The World's First Nachata is an example of celebrating Otherness and foreignness through Latin dance's cosmopolitan setting without questioning its roots in Taiwan. It is an example of how to legitimate a marginal local dance music practice through a foreign flavor. In *The World's First Nachata*, Shao sees the similarity of practitioners' class, the music

¹²⁴ This is a direct quote from Larry Shao's *The World First Nachata* installation video.

melody, and rhythm of the two music forms and decides to mix them together. He could be suggesting that the idea of authenticity is problematic. However, embracing globalized popular culture and finding similarities between “me” and the “other” indicates the degree of cosmopolitanism that the new generation of dancers in Taiwan may use to position themselves in the world. They are embracing the mixture of culture as a way to celebrate their escape from the dominant meta-narrative or grand narrative in cultural authenticity or national identity.

Shao is not alone in trying to combine salsa in relation to the Taiwanese locality. Tito Tang’s award winning salsa album *Antipodes* also suggests that the minority culture in Taiwan shares some similar traits with Latin culture. In 2013, Tito Tang won the Golden Melody Awards for best Hakka singer with his salsa album *Antipodes*.¹²⁵ In this music album, Tang uses Hakka elements combined with Latin music to offers a resistance to the mainstream imagination about male and female interactions. Tito Tang is a Hakka, a Han Chinese minority ethnic group in Taiwan who speak Hakka. Tito immigrated to Paraguay when he was young and keeps working and living between South America and Taiwan. He joined the Latin music band during his undergraduate studies in Paraguay, since then, he fell in love with Latin music. Although traveling and living between Taiwan and Paraguay, he is also the general director of a band that frequently performs in Brown Sugar, one of the most famous salsa dance bars in Taipei.

In this album *Antipodes*, Tang expresses his life as separated and connected between both Taiwan and Paraguay. To search for his unique identity, Tang sings the salsa music with Hakka lyrics to find a way to make connections between these two home towns. Hakka is an

¹²⁵ Golden Melody Award (金曲獎) is the most important annual music award in Taiwan and around Chinese spoken world for music.

ethnic group that had long been marginalized and repressed in Taiwanese history, as it links to lower class and thus was considered as vulgar taste, especially during the Martial law era. However, this discrimination has changed since the raising of Taiwanese independent movement. According to Tang, Hakka has a culture of singing and dancing. He emphasizes that Hakka music is always very colorful, relaxing, active, and energetic. Therefore, Hakka culture starts to be viewed as one local ethnic component that makes Taiwan unique.

Tang states that Hakka culture surprisingly suits the image of salsa music. He claims that Hakka music and dance is always colorful, with flowers. It is flirtatious. For example, in the famous Hakka song of the tea leaf pickers (採茶歌), the lyrics are always about pursuing love. It is always about male and female tea leaf pickers singing love songs to each other from far away across the valley, and expressing their emotions to the opposite sex. These tea leaf pickers songs represent the farmer culture of Taiwan and depict the everyday life of the local workers. Hakka has a musical root that is in favor of romantic and non-traditionally regulated courtship behaviors and love songs between men and women. This minority culture, especially as seen in the songs of the tea leaf pickers, actually offers a possibility for men and women to interact with each other in an active and non-traditional way. Tang chooses the Hakka lyric that celebrates the romantic and erotic feelings which allows him to make connections between Latin and Taiwanese cultures.

Tang, like Shao, finds the similarity between Latin and Taiwanese marginalized local cultures. Therefore, by looking at those two examples, we can see how Taiwanese artists strategically find similarity between Taiwanese and Latin culture to create their own local inventions. However, these non-mainstream bodily expressions between different genders in Taiwanese minority cultures are sometimes regarded as not socially acceptable. In these two cases, only by adding Latin culture to these local practices, marginalized music styles and

non-mainstream bodies become fashionable and appealing to Taiwanese.

Shao and Tang both declare a celebration of the similarities between Latin and Taiwanese culture. However, this presumed similarity between lower class art forms creates a fetishized concept of “authenticity.” At the same time, they dismiss the context of the artist’s own social position, which is problematic. In this regard, these artists maybe appropriate the marginal culture in Taiwan. Their creations indicate the desire for them to find reference of a Taiwanese local practice with a foreign cultural dance practice. While Shao claims that there are similarities in nakashi and bachata, yet if nakashi is already similar to bachata, why people do not just simply dance to the nakashi music but spend time in studios learning the bachata technique and pay for the entry fee for the salsa clubs?

Nevertheless, people buy into it. The local cultures are appropriated by the artists to forge a linkage to foreign culture. Because salsa, as a globalized cosmopolitan dance and music practice, operate independently. Adding these Latin components to the local practice can legitimate the local practices to be fashionable and global. In this way, the marginalized local music and dance can be practiced by young professional and middle class who do not have direct connection with any of these cultures.

To be clear, one has to understand that the salsa practitioners in Taiwan have a higher socioeconomic class than the class Shao mentioned in the nakashi background, which is very different from the nakashi musician or Hakka tea leaf pickers. Class plays an important role in the Taiwanese salsa scene due to the comparatively higher costs of learning salsa and attending salsa clubs, and the fact that the majority of salsa club goers in Taiwan tend to be young professional urban individuals without children, a spectrum of society that tends to have relatively more leisure time and money. These practitioners' social status is different from the working class of the bachata, nakashi, and even Hakka tea leaf pickers’ contexts. For

the upper middle class Taiwanese dancers, these minority local cultures become legitimated by connection to the foreign Latin dance forms. This idea mirrors how Taiwanese legitimate their nationalism through becoming cosmopolitan and embracing the globalization through a foreign salsa culture.

Conclusion

In the chapter, I have illustrated many ways in which Taiwanese salsa dancers are cosmopolitan. I assert that salsa enables an imagined community, where practitioners find links to each other. These salsa practitioners participate in this globalized salsa phenomena, especially the one that claims to “unify the world,” in order to gain accessibility to the “world.” They find themselves dancing and playing with the idea of an imagined global community through dancing salsa. Through the practice of the “Other” body, these Taiwanese salsa practitioners challenge governmental definitions of social identity— the international lack of recognition of Taiwan— in the international salsa events by performing as a Taiwanese team.

While nationalism and cosmopolitanism are sometimes considered opposite, my study of salsa in Taiwan suggests otherwise. Cosmopolitanism in my study becomes a strategy for the survival of Taiwanese nationalism in the case of Taiwanese salsa practice. In other words, nationalism and cosmopolitanism may facilitate each other in the case of Taiwanese salsa. However, even though culture transition is happening rapidly in exchange among nations, it does not necessarily mean that local influences such as class, race, and gender can be neglected. The celebratory articulation of cosmopolitanism as liberating nomadism overlooks the problems confronted when access to mobility encounters concrete realities of immigration, exchanges, and citizenship. To view cosmopolitanism as a pure positive

liberation may be naïve for not being able to examine the complicated class hierarchy within post-colonial contexts.

It is precisely against a fixed national identity of China or Taiwan that a possible Taiwanese identity might be mobilized. The idea of Taiwanese national identity has never been guaranteed. However, global citizenship may enable Taiwanese to enter the world stage. Taiwanese identity has only been found through concerted struggles. Taiwanese national identity is always in some sense in a state of emergence, never completed, and thus, is always contested. It is in these struggles that the rights of Taiwanese can be maintained and the justice of Taiwan can be advanced, and it is only through these struggles in actions, artistic expression, and social movements, that the national identity of Taiwan becomes visible to the rest of the world.

Conclusion: How to Imagine a Different Possibility from Reality

Everything that is new or uncommon raises a pleasure in the imagination, because it fills the soul with an agreeable surprise, gratifies its curiosity, and gives it an idea of which it was not before possessed.

—Joseph Addison

Our imagination is the only limit to what we can hope to have in the future.

—Charles F. Kettering

Our imagination is stretched to the utmost, not, as in fiction, to imagine things which are not really there, but just to comprehend those things which 'are' there.

—Richard Feynman

Flirting, as showed in salsa, enables imagining. Imagination creates alternate truths for people who believe in it. This dissertation examines how salsa offers a particular kind of imagination that is different from other partner dance. Through this specific imagination, salsa allows a shifting alliance among its practitioners. Because salsa has an improvised choreography, and its leader and follower's roles are not fixed, this dance allows a mutual and partially independent and dependent intersubjectivity. In addition, salsa has a history of being globalized since its beginning. As a globalized dance form, it allows the practitioners to actively engage with an imagined possibility of being cosmopolitan. From playing with the idea of sexual desire to playing with the idea of global citizenship, salsa offers an imagination from the most intimate to the most distant.

I have sought to intervene in existing critical writing on the globalization of salsa as a cosmopolitan practice, and identity construction in Taiwan through an analysis of flirtation. Like other cultural products, dance is specific to a society in which it develops. Dancers actively engage with each other through an imagined self to articulate a different kind of

identity. In my study, I look at the possibility of imagining in salsa dance, and at how salsa allows a shifting alliance. The intersections between the globalized dance practices and their social, cultural, political, and economic environment illustrate the multiplicity of interpretations and trajectories of development within each local politics. My research in salsa offers a new way to study politics through a body centered imaginary in response to the current politics in East Asia.

Some people might think that imagination just occurs in the creative process and is never real. However, with an eye toward how local practitioners flirt with an idea of imagined identities through foreign dance practice, my research gives evidence that imagination is a process of negotiation and can turn into real resistance. I also have shown how salsa movement allows a particular kind of agency for both practitioners through a phenomenological perspective. Flirting is about an active participation of an imagining process that allows for creating temporary relationships. Through imagination as casual play, one has the chance to make a political statement and embody it by practice.

Imagination in this Taiwanese context tests the theory of nationalism and cosmopolitanism by showing that Taiwanese nationalism is made possible by a cosmopolitan salsa setting. It also offers insights into the theory of identity formation, gender performance, colonialism, tourism, transnationalism, and post-colonialism. I have shown how imagination in salsa dance works as a “time-out” from the ordinary, and thus allows opportunities for people to flirt with a relationship without commitment. These temporary and imagined gender and national identities parallel each in other in the Taiwanese context, because they allows for a safe and short term identity without any potential for social disaster. This study of imagination and flirtation could possibly be applicable to other contexts and contribute to a broader theory in dance studies in looking at other globalized dance with local practice.

Imagination in dance is a topic that has been attracting recent attention. Just this year, there were two books published on the similar theorization of imagination in partner dance (Davis, 2015; Fitch, 2015). Both books argue for an imagined cosmopolitan practice of global tango that allows for ambivalent and hierarchical negotiation.¹²⁶ This might indicate that cosmopolitan dance practice and the imagination at work in partner dance practice is a trend in dance studies. By positioning salsa as a soft form of resistance that is especially useful for people who want to avoid social disasters in a restricted society, my research with a focus on flirtation offers a salsa context that is different from theirs. I also push forward an examination of intersubjective dialogue in a Taiwanese context.

By theorizing flirtation as an imagining process in salsa, I hope to change the way people think of salsa and the Taiwanese identity. Salsa does not just belong to Latinos, and it should not only be examined under the Latin diaspora identity formation. Salsa stands for cosmopolitanism as it is promoted to “unite the world.” Although it remains economical charges of appropriation in this globalization process, this cosmopolitan practice can produce different meanings in Asian than in the Americas or Europe. Moreover, the idea of inauthenticity in salsa and salsa unites the world allows Taiwanese to play with an imagined national identity. This national identity formation through the foreign is unique. The structure of this identity formation is hierarchical and thus needs further attention.

My dissertation also raises a number of follow up questions: would other transnational dance forms also, like salsa, bring resistance to the patriarchic and postcolonial structure in Taiwan? How is a globalized dance form transformed, reimagined, and reinterpreted in

¹²⁶ Kathy Davis asserts that tango is “a matter of play” (Davis, 2015: 119), “exotic 'time-out'” from the ordinary (121), allowing opportunities for “connection without commitment” (122). In addition, Melissa A. Fitch analyzes tango in relation to zen, and how the use of the principals of *qi* works in Asian tango practice (Fitch, 2015). Their books came out recently and therefore I did not include them in my analysis. However, I believe their works are in some way in dialogue with my research.

relation to various socio-political contexts? How are particular bodies framed, received, and presented in different dance forms and in various locations? What cultural geography and the theory of scale can help us to analyze dance? How do the bodies “created” in those dance forms enable different imaginings? What does it mean to dance and to imagine a different self? How does imagining work in the process of intersubjective relations? How does imagining help us to analyze intersubjective relations? Can phenomenology bring dance studies and political area studies closer together? What does imagining allow us to do in the world that we live in? My research in Taiwanese salsa provides the potential to ask these questions and suggests a way to move toward answering them.

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