

A Historical Study of Changes of Dance in Taiwan under the Influence of Japan and Korea during Japanese Colonization

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I. Introduction

The development of dance in Taiwan in the early twentieth century saw the field of dance and dance education shaped and reshaped by cultural factors under Japanese colonial rule(1895-1945). The major impetus of the cultural factors was political change, from the Qing Dynasty (prior to 1895) to the five decades of Japanese colonial rule, which has forced Taiwanese society to undergo social-cultural transformation. Under such circumstance, people's attitudes and aesthetic judgments towards dance were affected by changes in the society, political systems and culture.

The development of dance in its social status, value, function, and the society's aesthetic dispositions were therefore influenced by internal and external forces that transformed Taiwan in its modern history. The forces that stimulated major changes in dance were mostly covert and unspoken. Most significantly, dance developed from a form of low culture into a partially acceptable art form during this historical period, to become a field of study in higher education in the second half of the twentieth century.

This study utilizes the theory of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu to discuss the major function of dance and changes of aesthetic dispositions derived from socio-political transformation in Taiwan

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during this time period. Bourdieu's theory contributes to the discussion of the socio-aesthetic issues created by the change of the regime and the crossing borders of the dance artists from Japan and Korea. Five key concepts of his theory, field, agent, habitus, cultural capital and symbolic violence, will be defined and explained, then applied in relation to social values, cultural account, and hierarchical differentiation in Taiwan's dance development.

In order to manifest the significant changes in dance during this historical period, the researcher will first discuss the development of dance in the late nineteenth century under the Manchurian Ching Dynasty Empire before Japanese imperial rule took over the sovereignty. Understanding this historical background is crucial for it provides "a radical cogency that can make visible aspects of the past that have previously been overlooked or sidelined, thereby producing fresh insights."¹⁾ A historical appraisal is presented in this study for this purpose. The researcher will then examine the instances of symbolic violence from the political change and their effects on Taiwan's dance development. Also importantly, I will analyze changes in socio-aesthetic dispositions of the society by the visits of Japanese and Korean dance artists.

II. The Bourdieuan approach

Bourdieu's theory covers a wide range of socio-political and educational issues.²⁾ These terms are interdependent and relational, rather than isolated, and together they form an interconnected web in Taiwan's dance field.³⁾ As follows, each of the terms will be defined and their applicability to this study will be explained.

1. The dance field

Bourdieu's concept of field will be used to explore the predisposition, structure and value of

1) K. Jenkins(1991), *Re-thinking history*. (London: Routledge), p.81.

2) P. Bourdieu(1977), *Outline of a theory of practice*(R. Nice, Trans.), (Cambridge: Cambridge UP), (Original work published 1972); P. Bourdieu(1984), *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*(R. Nice, Trans.), (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP), (Original work published 1979); P. Bourdieu (1993a), *The field of cultural production: Essays on art and literature*(R. Johnson, Ed.), (New York, NY: Columbia UP); P. Bourdieu(1990), *The logic of practice*(R. Nice, Trans.), (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP), (Original work published 1980); P. Bourdieu(1993b), *Sociology in question*(R. Nice, Trans.), (London: Sage), (Original work published 1980); P. Bourdieu(1998b), *Sociology in question*(R. Nice, Trans.), (London: Sage) (Original work published 1994); P. Bourdieu(2007), *The forms of capital*(R. Nice, Trans.). In A. R. Sadovnik (Ed.), *Sociology of education: A critical reader* (pp. 83-95),(London: Routledge); Bourdieu, P. & Passeron, J.-C.(1990), *Reproduction in education, society and culture*(R. Nice, Trans.), (London: Sage), (Original work published 1970); Bourdieu, P. & Wacquant, L.(1992), *An invitation to reflexive sociology*(L. Wacquant, Trans.), (Cambridge: Polity)

3) P. Bourdieu and L. Wacquant(1992), *An invitation to reflexive sociology*(L. Wacquant, Trans.), (Cambridge: Polity), p.96.

Taiwan's dance in the early twentieth century. Bourdieu describes a field as a structured system constituted by the social positions which provide individuals with socially allotted spaces to build, perform, compete for, or exchange power relations. Different fields are either independently operated or correspondingly related, and each of the fields is distinctly different from others.⁴⁾ In Bourdieu's explanation, "a field may be defined as a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions."⁵⁾ The objective relations that Bourdieu refers to are the relations between resources, such as opportunities, funding and/or education, with individuals socially located according to the amount of resources that they are able to obtain.

Drawing on this definition, a dance field can be understood as, for example, a social space for performance and training that sees the relations between dancers, choreographers and institutions competing for or cooperating in the same interests. The relations and positions essential to the dance field manifest the interdependency of seemingly independent entities, which are, the dancers, choreographers and dance institutions. In this study, I aim to investigate how the social positions of these individuals have been shuffled and reshuffled throughout the years of dance's development. Following this, the transformation of their attitudes and practices, the interaction of the powers and legitimate processes in confrontation with dominant and symbolic forces will be analyzed to demonstrate distinctions and subfields within the dance field and their interactions.

2. The dance agents

One of the fundamental elements of a field is its social actors, the agents, who form and occupy the social space within the field. According to Bourdieu, the agents of a field are the social actors "who are socially constituted as active and acting in the field under consideration by the fact that they possess the necessary properties to be effective, to produce effects, in this field."⁶⁾ The field of dance in higher education is constituted by a variety of individuals whose social positions are recognized in relation to the dance profession, such as dance students, dancers, choreographers, dance instructors and dance scholars. The agents also refer to related institutions such as private dance studios, dance institutions in higher and secondary education, local and state governments that are involved with policies related to dance, and clubs or centers that organize dance activities.

Agents of a field, whether they belong to an institution, a group, or operate independently, may exercise their agency to adjust or remain unchanged for personal preference to obtain better opportunities and positions. For example, in Taiwan's dance field, the major function of dance in any

4) P. Bourdieu(1984), *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*(R. Nice, Trans.), (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP) (Original work published 1979), p.226.

5) P. Bourdieu and L. Wacquant(1992), *An invitation to reflexive sociology*(L. Wacquant, Trans.), (Cambridge: Polity), p.97.

6) *Ibid.*, p.107.

given period reflects the characteristics of its agents, i.e., the tastes, dispositions, and power relations of the agents. In other words, when a particular function of dance is dominant over other functions, many dance agents develop a tendency to discuss, attend, create, and/or perform related dance themes. When the function of dance shifts, the dance agents shift accordingly and thus alter the behaviors of the dance field. This shows that dance agents who exercise agency are able to adjust themselves to suit the major function of dance in any given period.

3. The habitus

The habitus, as Bourdieu explains, is “an open system of dispositions that is constantly subjected to experiences, and therefore constantly affected by them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structures.”⁷⁾ In this study, the habitus refers to an individual’s or a group’s beliefs, attitudes, practices, preferences and values in dance. For either the individual or the collective habitus, the experiences that have an influence over the habitus are usually derived from the behavior and socialization of individuals or institutions such as family, school or church. All of these develop through time to form a lasting habitus. However, the habitus can be adjusted when experiences are altered. Thus Bourdieu insists that the habitus is “durable but not eternal.”⁸⁾

Dance in Taiwan is one of the social arenas that is constantly affected by socio-political factors. These factors are the major forces that have molded the function of dance throughout different historical stages and that has goaded social agents into forming collective behaviors and thus, the habitus. In any given political period, the power relations between the agents, and their struggles for desirable resources drove the field to operate by means of certain practices. As a result, the habitus of the field transformed under changes in political circumstances, and the propensity of the field has been reshaped. Thus, the field is found to exist in a situation of “endless change.”⁹⁾

4. Cultural capital

Using the Marxist concept of economic capital, Bourdieu went further and proposed other forms of capital, that is, “social capital (various kinds of valued relations with relevant persons), cultural capital (primarily legitimate knowledge of one kind or another) and symbolic capital (prestige and social honor).”¹⁰⁾ Through accumulating or losing forms of capital, the positions and power relations of social agents are determined in particular fields. In Bourdieu’s view, these other forms of capital operate in structures analogous to economic capital in the sense that they can be accumulated, invested

7) Ibid., p.133.

8) Ibid., p.133.

9) Ibid., p.103.

10) R. Jenkins(2002), *Pierre Bourdieu*(London: Routledge), p.85.

and transferred within a social space.¹¹⁾ These forms of capital are often tightly connected with socially distinguished classes, as Bourdieu states:

The primary differences, those which distinguish the major classes of conditions of existence, derive from the overall volume of capital, understood as the set of actually usable resources and powers – economic capital, cultural capital and also social capital. The distribution of the different classes (and class fractions) thus runs from those who are best provided with both economic and cultural capital to those who are most deprived in both respects.¹²⁾

Each form of capital is valued according to the social space where it is found.¹³⁾ In other words, some of these forms of capital might be highly valued in one field while as largely ignored in another. In the dance field, cultural capital usually holds priority over other forms of capital, however, economic capital, symbolic capital and social capital are still important. In addition, the accumulation of cultural capital often enables dance agents to collect power and to locate their positions in a dominant space. Thus, cultural capital is often the key to regulating rules and practices in the dance field. However, the value of cultural capital changes as the habitus and function of dance changes. Accordingly, many agents of the dance field exercise the agency of adjusting themselves in order to preserve or increase their cultural capital for the purpose of maintaining social positions and to ensure power relations within the field.

5. Symbolic violence

Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence shines a light on the visible and hidden forces that are spurred on by socio-political factors in Taiwan which directly or indirectly influence changes in dance. In his view, "all pedagogic action is, objectively, symbolic violence insofar as it is the imposition of a cultural arbitrary by an arbitrary power."¹⁴⁾ The cultural arbitrary refers to the mechanism that the dominant group uses to overpower the dominated group in terms of behavior, attitudes, beliefs, thoughts, values and preferences. The cultural arbitrary is usually carried out by arbitrary power, which is, to draw from an old but common definition, "an act of the will not be guided nor restricted by any law" or "a power without external limits."¹⁵⁾

11) P. Bourdieu(2007), *The forms of capital*(R. Nice, Trans.). In A. R. Sadovnik (Ed.), *Sociology of education: A critical reader*(London: Routledge), p.84.

12) P. Bourdieu(1984), *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*(R. Nice, Trans.), (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP), (Original work published 1979), p.114.

13) P. Bourdieu and L. Wacquant(1992), *An invitation to reflexive sociology*(L. Wacquant, Trans.), (Cambridge: Polity), pp.97-98.

14) P. Bourdieu and J.-C. Passeron(1990), *Reproduction in education, society and culture*(R. Nice, Trans.), (London: Sage), (Original work published 1970), p.5.

15) M. Block(2004), Arbitrary power. *Cyclopædia of political science, political economy, and the political history of the United States*. Library of Economics and Liberty. <<http://www.econlib.org/library/YPDBooks/Lalor/11Cy74.html>>.

III. The repression of dance in the traditional Taiwanese society

Dance in Taiwan was a component of drama, entertainment and ritual ceremonies for the aborigines and the ethnic Han people in the traditional society. These two ethnic groups had different attitudes towards bodily movements during the late nineteenth century prior to the Japanese colonization. For the dominant ethnic Han group, dance as a symbol in society received almost no respect and the value of dance was underestimated while as most of the aboriginal groups treasured dance as an important tradition in their culture. Since the aborigines in Taiwan did not have a written form of language and the ethnic Han people who brought with them written Chinese felt inappropriate to mention the word 'dance' in spoken language or in writing, thus documents about dance were not very abundant in this time period.¹⁶⁾

The earliest documents, *Taiwan tongshi*¹⁷⁾ and *Yayien*¹⁸⁾ gave a clear depiction of life in Taiwan from the seventeenth through the early twentieth century. In both volumes, evidence is shown that romantic songs accompanying bodily movements were considered socially inappropriate and were banned in Taiwan during the late nineteenth century.¹⁹⁾ The performers, including dancers and actors, were in a lower tier profession, dominated by the need to entertain the upper class. Their social status was ranked with prostitutes, witches, music players, pig farmers, barbers, house servants, masseurs, and grave diggers, as the lowest nine social tiers.²⁰⁾ The social bias acted as symbolic violence that separated these people from the rest of the society.

IV. The rise of dance in the education reform during Japanese colonization

Soon after Japan occupied Taiwan, Taiwan's tradition faced severe challenge.²¹⁾ Japan's policy of

16) P. C. Lin and H. Y. Liu(1990), *Bian qian zhong de tai min xi qu yu wen hua* [Culture and opera of Min-nan Taiwanese in the process of transformation], (Taipei, Taiwan: Taiyuan), pp.94-100.; Y. H. Zeng(2006), Romanization and the books of the aborigines: The history of Taiwan's education during the Dutch colonization. *Rhythms Monthly*, 90, pp.60-68; 70-73.

17) H. Lien(1995), *Tai-wan tong shi* [General history of Taiwan]. Taipei, Taiwan: Chung-chin. (Original work published 1920).

18) H. Lien(1987), *Ya yan* [Refined talks]. Taipei, Taiwan: Taiwan Datong. (Original work published 1933).

19) H. Lien(1987), *Ya yan* [Refined talks]. Taipei, Taiwan: Taiwan Datong. (Original work published 1933), p.33.; H. Lien(1995), *Tai-wan tong shi* [General history of Taiwan](Taipei, Taiwan: Chung-chin),(Original work published 1920), p.613.

20) P. C. Lin and H. Y. Liu(1990), *Bian qian zhong de tai min xi qu yu wen hua* [Culture and opera of Min-nan Taiwanese in the process of transformation], (Taipei, Taiwan: Taiyuan), p.100.; J. A. Tai(2010), *Pride, prejudice and politics in dance: The rise of dance as a symbolic power in Taiwan* (Germany: Lambert Academic Publishing), p.12.

21) J. N. Lai(1996), *The codes of thought control in Taiwan under Japanese colonial rule, 1895-1945*. Unpublished master's thesis, Chinese Culture University, Taipei, Taiwan.; N. J. Su(2002), *Analyze a*

westernization and modernization transformed Taiwan's society in many ways and increased the value of dance as a result of the education reform. According to Patricia Tsurumi in "Colonial Education in Korea and Taiwan,"²²⁾ the Japanese rule on education system challenged traditional habitus in Taiwan, especially for women's education opportunity. This new rule shocked the Taiwanese society and changed its social and cultural habitus.

Before Japanese colonization, Taiwanese women were not allowed to attend most social activities due to gender inequalities and the common practice of foot binding.²³⁾ However, under Japanese rule, both genders, especially children of the elite class, were encouraged to attend courses at all levels of education. In the early colonial years, the inclusion of sports and rhythmic movements in the school curricula upset many Taiwanese parents who were uncomfortable with activities that involved bodily movements.²⁴⁾ With time, this attitude changed, and the ideas introduced through Japanese educational policy dominated the development of dance. Thus, more Taiwanese women in this period than the previous century had a better chance to gain cultural capital through education.

V. Japanese inspiration on the development of dance in Taiwan

Among the Japanese dance masters, Baku Ishii visited Taiwan in 1926 and inspired many Taiwanese students who later went to Japan to study with him. Two of Baku Ishii's Taiwanese students, Tsai Jui-yueh (1921-2005) and Lee Tsai-o (1926-), studied ballet, German *neue tanz* (new dance) and Eurhythmics with him. They returned after World War Two and established the earliest private dance studios in Taiwan in the 1940s.²⁵⁾ Miss Lee, who was my first dance mentor, is now over ninety years old but still active in the dance field and performs on stage sometimes.

Another Taiwanese student, Lin Hsiang-yun (1926-) studied dancing, singing, and acting at the

revolution in Japan's settlement period of Taiwan: Focus on XI LAI AN revolution. Unpublished master's thesis, Chinese Culture University, Taipei, Taiwan.

- 22) E. P. Tsurumi(1984), Colonial education in Korea and Taiwan. In R. H. Myers & M. R. Peattie (Eds.), *The Japanese colonial empire, 1895 -1945* (pp. 275-311). Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP.
- 23) S. Y. Hsieh(2004), *Ri zhi chu qi (1895-1916) tai-wan gong xue xiao de nu zi ti yu yu fang zu yun dong* [Female students' physical education and liberation from foot-binding in Taiwan's state-sector schools in the state sectors during early Japanese colonization, 1895-1916]. *Taiwan Wen Hsien*, 55(2), p.210.
- 24) J. S. Tsai(2006), *Ri zhi chu qi tai wan nu zi (jiao) ti yu* [Taiwan female (physical) education when ruled by Japan]. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of Dance Research Society, December 9-10, Taiwan on Dancing under the rising sun: The Influences of Japanese Colonialism on Dance in the Asia-Pacific Region, Taipei, Taiwan.; E. P. Tsurumi(1984), Colonial education in Korea and Taiwan. In R. H. Myers & M. R. Peattie (Eds.), *The Japanese colonial empire, 1895 -1945*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, pp.293-294.
- 25) C. F. Chao(2004), *Lee Tsai O: Yong yuan de bao dao ming zhu* [Lee Tsai-o: Eternal pearl of Formosa], (Taipei, Taiwan: Council for Cultural Affairs.); W. T. Hsiao(1998), *Tai-wan wu dao de xian zhi: Tsai Jui-yueh kou shu li shi* [Prophet of Taiwan's dance: An oral history by Tsai Jui-yueh], (Taipei, Taiwan: Council for Cultural Affairs).

school that was established by the Shochiku Film Company.²⁶⁾ This training was indeed a preparation for her later career in the entertainment business. When Lin came back to Taiwan, she not only opened a private dance school but also the girls-only Yihsia Musical Company, which reached its peak of popularity in the 1960s.²⁷⁾

Ballet was the main course taught at these private studios besides occasional lessons on German new dance or traditional Chinese court dances. Through these private dance institutions, European influence, especially ballet and German new dance, was brought into Taiwan via Japan. However, unlike the rhythmic movements that were taught in schools during the Japanese colonization, ballet was taught to some children (from well-off families) as a private form of consumption during the post-World War Two period. Dance agents in this time were treated in the Taiwanese society with respect not only due to their possession of cultural capital but also of their economic, social and symbolic capital.

VI. Choi Seung-hee's visit and her influence on dance in Taiwan

Choi Seung-hee(최승희; 1911-1969), a Korean dance-artist, visited Taiwan in 1936. She was invited by the Taiwanese Literary Alliance (also known as Taiwan-Bungei Alliance), “the biggest New Literature Movement in Japanese-era Taiwan, and has even been referred to as ‘unprecedented’ in Taiwan’s literary history.”²⁸⁾ Her visit not only stirred up the very first wave of “Korea-mania,” but also created a new dimension of social status and aesthetic disposition of dance in Taiwan. Particularly, she implicitly inspired the first Taiwanese male dancer, Lin Ming-de (1914-) who perceived nationalism in Choi Seung-hee’s performance and determined to study and perform Chinese classical dance.

Lin’s performance reminded the audience of Chinese artist Mei Lanfang(1894-1961) who was one of the most well-known Peking opera performers in modern history, particularly for his qingyi role (a type of the virtuous lady). To Lin, it was through Choi Seung-hee’s dance as a form of nonverbal communication that her passion for Korean nationalism, hidden in the contents, was revealed through her movement expressions.²⁹⁾ Dance during this period, whether considered as a form of

26) Y. G. Lin(2004), *Lin hsiang yun: miao wu cui can zi fei yang* [The graceful dancing of Lin Hsiang-yun], (Taipei, Taiwan: Council for Cultural Affairs), p.114.

27) *Ibid.*, pp.114-115.

28) Z. R. Lee(2009), Tai-wan Wen-yi Lien-meng [Taiwanese Literary Alliance]. In *Encyclopedia of Taiwan*, <<http://taiwanpedia.culture.tw/web/content?ID=4562>>.

29) W. Y. Hsu(2013), *Wu-dao, kua-yu yu fan-zhi-min: 1930 nian-dai chao-xian wu-ji Choi Seung-hee lei tai de ji yuan yu ying xiang* [Dance, cross- fields and anti-colonialism: The opportunity and influence of Korean dancer Choi Seung-hee’s visiting Taiwan in the 1930s]. Paper presented at the 2013 Arts and Culture Conference, September 6, Taichung, Taiwan.

entertainment in society or a sport in school, was actually showing its symbolic power in its own way. That aspect was only perceivable to, and communicable between, the ones who could be empowered by it.

VII. Conclusion

Investigating the developing process of dance in early twentieth century Taiwan reveals the up-and-down of power relations between different agents in Taiwan's dance field. Throughout the development process, the social position of dance had been misunderstood, differentiated, manipulated and/or promoted, in the society by foreign cultures. This research gives a brief account of social relations as a whole. In other words, as Desmond states, "Concepts of cultural resistance, appropriation, and cultural imperialism are important for the light they shed on the unequal distribution of power and goods that shape social relations."³⁰

History is the way that we understand our world today. The effects of new ideas communicated through dance nonverbally might seem relatively minor to a ruler, but they were significantly influential on Taiwan's dance field in light of aesthetical dispositions. Through dance, the societies of Taiwan, Korea and Japan were linked within its sphere despite the political anguish created by the Japanese occupation.

30) C. J. Desmond(1997), *Meaning in motion: New cultural studies of dance*(Durham, NC: Duke UP), p.49.

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The fields of dance and dance education in Taiwan had been shaped and reshaped by internal and external cultural factors during Japanese colonization (1895-1945). The changes in political, cultural and social practices affected people's aesthetic dispositions towards dance, so the value and function of dance varied accordingly. This research applied five key concepts of Pierre Bourdieu's analytical framework, field, agent, habitus, cultural capital, and symbolic violence, to analyse the major change of dance in this historical stage. Through this study, foreign influence on the development of dance in Taiwan from Japan and Korea during Japanese colonization can be understood.

Keywords: Cultural capital(문화 자본), Dance agent(무용 행위주체), Dance field(무용의 장), Habitus(아비투스), Symbolic violence(상징적 폭력)