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博士（スポーツ科学）

Exotic Image, Healthy Exercise, Modern Beauty and
Traditional Virtue:
The Glocalization of Belly Dance in Taiwan

台湾人女性とベリーダンス：
変容する女性らしさに関する人類学的研究

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Introduction

Motivation

When I first attended a belly dance class in Taiwan with the desire to lose weight, I was surprised to find the instructor was larger than me in size. I still remember the instructor saying, “Belly dancing is a dance form with a long history which has healing qualities both for women’s bodies and minds. Women of all shapes, sizes and ages are able to discover their own beauty and self-confidence through the dance.” At the time, I was doubtful whether belly dancing itself can heal my mind and bring me confidence. Most women I know take belly dance as an exercise for toning. They gain self-confidence through improving their body shape rather than through the dance alone.

Half a year later, I joined another belly dance class in Tokyo when starting my PhD coursework. Like a carbon copy of my Taiwanese instructor, the Japanese instructor repeated the idea that belly dance is therapeutic to all women, especially in building self-esteem. After browsing a multitude of websites about belly dance in Taiwan, Japan and the United States, I found that what my instructors shared is a commonly held belief in the global belly dance community. As a student with a background in anthropology and the study of leisure and health, I could not help but question: why is a traditional folk dance able to heal modern women? Does it empower women around the world in the same way?

I became a member of Harvard Middle Eastern Dance Troupe after starting my visiting fellow program at the Harvard-Yenching Institute. Most of my foreign friends were very surprised to learn that many Taiwanese women do belly dance for exercise and non-paid performances. Their surprise primarily came from the impression that

belly dance is very sexy whereas the stereotype of women from a society with Confucian tradition is that they tend to be more conservative in displaying sexiness. “I didn’t know Taiwanese women have become so open,” commented my Harvard mentor after I introduced my dissertation project in our first meeting. I don’t feel women who do belly dance in Taiwan are very open. However, these comments inspired me to explore the local representation of this globalized dance as well as the interpretation of belly dance and women’s gender role ideals in my native country today.

Overview of chapters

Chapter 1: Background

This chapter reviews the societal change and the transition of women’s gender roles in Taiwan, the globalization history of belly dance, and the history of leisure exercise and dance in Taiwan. I then introduce the purpose, originality and methods adopted in this study.

Chapter 2: The development of belly dance in Taiwan

I divide the developing history of belly dance in Taiwan into two phases: the initial stage (2002 to 2007) and the developmental stage (from 2007). In the first half of this chapter, I give an introduction of the initial stage by introducing the pioneering promoters and organization. In the second part, I give a more detailed picture of the present landscape of Taiwanese belly dance by showing the ethnographic data I collected in dance classes.

Chapter 3: The local features of Taiwanese belly dance

Based on data collected in this study, I argue there are five features of the present development of belly dance in Taiwan: numerous community-based belly dance classes and performances; mature women as major participants; emphasis on the effects for body-beauty and enhancing femininity; the hybrid representation of the Middle East; and competition for health and national pride. In this chapter, I explore each of these features and make some comparisons between the representation of belly dance in Taiwan and in other countries.

Chapter 4: Belly dance and gender role

Contrary to traditional gender expectations in Taiwan, the display of the body and femininity is exceptionally encouraged in belly dancing. This chapter examines how women integrate belly dancing with ideal gender images without conflict. Results show that most belly dancers take their ideal gender image as one that combines the modern notion of beauty with the traditional notion of goodness. By viewing belly dancing as a body toning exercise or leisure activity, a frugal and natural approach to acquiring femininity and beauty, interviewees differentiate themselves from the “bad others” to construct a “beautiful-and-good” female image.

Chapter 1 Background

Confucian values strongly influenced gender stereotypes in Taiwan in the past.¹ According to traditional stereotypes, women were relegated to the domestic sphere, and the ideal “good” woman was expected to be modest, frugal, virtuous, caring and filial. In contrast, expressing femininity, charm or beauty outside of the household was considered indecent. Women who danced in public might be regarded as “dancing girls,” i.e. members of the “bad women” category.² Socioeconomic change in Taiwan and the globalization of the culture industry have contributed to the construction of a modern version of ideal images of women as independent, slim, sexy and beautiful. However, the traditional ideal was not totally displaced by the modern version. Previous studies have shown that married or older women are still more constrained by traditional gender expectations; interestingly, they have become the majority of belly dance participants in Taiwan.

Belly dancing originated in the Middle East as a form of folk dance, and it has been transformed to become a leisure/exercise dance activity for women in the past few decades.³ Belly dancing has also become better known in several East Asian countries, such as Taiwan, China, Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong and Japan, where the dance is usually promoted as a body-slimming exercise and is helpful for enhancing women’s self-confidence.

¹ Confucianism has had a tremendous impact on how Taiwanese people live their lives. It is a complex system of moral teaching based on ancient Chinese tradition built up by Confucius. As Taiwan

² Traditionally, women in Confucian society are discouraged to expose their body parts in public. In the ancient Chinese culture, women were evaluated based on the doctrine of four virtues. The four virtues were: (1) womanly virtue; (2) womanly words; (3) womanly bearing; and (4) womanly work. Womanly virtue means that women do not need to be brilliant or have different opinions from others. Womanly words means that women should speak at an appropriate time, should avoid offensive language, and should choose their words carefully. A woman with womanly bearing and work should have the characteristics of keeping herself and her family clean and be well-prepared for housework. These four virtues implied that women should control their behavior and act in a modest way (Ling 1990)

³ Some men do belly dancing as well but women are the majority

Belly dancing was introduced to Taiwan in 2002 and has become an emerging exercise for toning one's body among Taiwanese women. Contrary to traditional gender expectations, belly dancing encourages the display of the feminine body. To understand the background of this study, first I will review various social changes and the transitions in women's gender roles in Taiwan, focusing on the past sixty years. Second, I will review the global history of belly dance and the developments of belly dance in Taiwan. Finally, I'm going to review related studies and then introduce the purposes and methods used in this study.

1-1 Womanhood in transition

Taiwan's women and men are both heir to China's long and complex patterns of gender definition and relationships. They are also heirs to the unique course of development that Taiwan has been forced to take in the past fifty years, which makes it a place where one can observe the transformation of attitudes and behaviors in an environment of rapid socioeconomic and political change.

(Farris, Lee and Rubinstein, 2004: vii)

1-1-1 Traditional gender role (Confucianism)

Having historically been ruled by the Spanish, Dutch, Manchus, Japanese and Chinese, Taiwan has a complex culture. In terms of gender role stereotypes, Confucianism and Japanese male chauvinism had particularly strong influences.⁴ Aside from the tradition that a woman shall be tamed to be a virtuous wife and good mother, many

⁴ During half a century of colonial rule, the Japanese custom that men are well attended by women while women shall submit to men's domination was transplanted into Taiwanese families (Lu 1994: 290)

Chinese Confucian disciplines contributed to the androcentric society and were detrimental to women (Lu 1994:291).

Male superiority and dominance characterizes the gender ideals of Confucianism, the prevailing Han Chinese worldview and state-orthodoxy throughout Imperial China. The inferiority and subordination of women is proclaimed by dominant Han Chinese ideologies, which are structurally reinforced by the strong patrilineal kinship system (Du 2011:2, 5). The Chinese scholarly tradition has always emphasized the distinction between sexes and that each has a place and duty in the family (Tamney and Chiang 2002:130-133). According to the classic *I Ching* (易經)⁵ of 3000 B.C.E., yin/yang complementarity underlies the relation between a husband and wife, which *I Ching* defines as the primordial form of human relationships. The idea of complementarity in marriage is exemplified in the different roles and attributes assigned to each gender. Another classic Confucian book *Li Chi* (禮記)⁶ dictates a division of labor in which men are charged with the extra-domestic sphere while women are charged with the domestic sphere. The notion of complementarity also shapes the Chinese cultural definition of gender attributes, in which women's gentleness and docility are seen as complementary to men's strength and indomitability (Lu 2004:239-240).

During the Han dynasty and until the modern period, Chinese scholars and rulers developed a highly patriarchal society. The ideology of “three bonds”—the minister serves the ruler, the son the father, the wife the husband—became established during the Han dynasty. Also, several writings were completed at the time to exemplify the models of being good women. *Lessons for women* contained very conservative advice for women, and advised women to win the favor of their men with wholehearted

⁵ Also known as *Book of Changes*, is one of the oldest Chinese classic texts

⁶ Or translated as *Book of Rites*, a collection of texts describing the social forms, administration, and ceremonial rites of the Zhou Dynasty (Warring States)

devotion.⁷ *Li Chi* contained the idea that women's lives should follow "Three Rules of Obedience": Obedience to the father before marriage, obedience to the husband after marriage, and obedience to the son in widowhood. These Rules counseled against remarriage and excluded women from public life.⁸ Women were expected to stay home and serve their husbands and parent-in-laws (Tamney and Chiang 2001:130-131).

Leih Nu Chuan (列女傳)⁹ and *Chia Fun* (家風)¹⁰ urged females to sacrifice their happiness and lives to preserve the "good name" of their families. **Womanhood** meant a woman who is obedient, quiet, self-effacing and ignorant, devoting herself only to the service of the family. Widowhood and filial piety were highly valued. In the Song dynasty, Confucian scholars further developed the patriarchal tradition. Famous scholars such as Cheng Yi¹¹ and Zhu Xi¹² preached the importance of female chastity (Chiao 1992).¹³

Campaigns to promote the ideology of gender inequality in the Song, Ming, and Qing dynasties had an even greater impact on society than previous efforts in earlier times. Confucians developed more restrictions for females. Some women were forced to bind their feet as children. For millennia, the Chinese became increasingly patriarchal, the process reaching its most repressive phase shortly before Chinese society began the current modernization process (Tamney and Chiang 2001:132).

⁷ To show some quotes from the writing: "If a wife does not serve her husband, then the proper relationship (between men and women) and the natural order of things are neglected and destroyed."; "Let a woman modestly yield to others; let her respect others; let her put others first, herself last." (quoted in Swann 1960:83-88, cited from Tamney and Chiang 2002:130)

⁸ As it was written, "Men have their proper work and women have their homes" (quoted in Wu 1987:63).

⁹ Or translated as *Biographies of Virtuous Women*; compiled by scholar Lui Xiang (77-6 B.C.) in Han Dynasty

¹⁰ Or translated as *Family Model*; a text written by Shi Ma Kaun in Song Dynasty (around 11A.D.)

¹¹ 1033-1107 A.D.

¹² Zhu Xi (1130-1200 A.D.) wrote, "It is alright for a woman to die in hunger but not alright to lose her chastity." He also advised women to follow the examples contained in the popular *Biographies of Virtuous Women* (Tamney and Chiang 2001:132)

¹³ Cited from Tamney and Chiang (2001: 132)

During the second half of the twentieth century, the situation of women in Sinitic societies changed dramatically. These changes were influenced by both ideological and pragmatic thinking. On the one hand, modern ideas about women were accepted by Chinese political leaders, who turned these ideas into public policies. On the other hand, governments recognized the economic advantage of involving women directly in the economic development project. Many women entered the labor market help to write the economic success stories of China, Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan (Tamney and Chiang 2001:133-134).

1-1-2 Reinvented Confucian tradition propagated by Kuomintang (KMT) 1950s to early 1980s

In 1949, the Kuomintang (KMT) retreated to Taiwan and then began to redesign the island in its own image. With U.S. aid rebuilding and backing up the state's military defense system, the KMT government felt secure enough to push an ambitious domestic restructuring plan. First, an ambitious and effective system of land reform was introduced and carried through successfully. Next, a program of import substitution was introduced and a new industrial infrastructure was put in place (Farris, Lee and Rubinstein 2004: vii-viii).¹⁴ In 1965, the government took another major step by establishing the first Export Processing Zones in a southwest coastal city Kaohsiung, where an industrial park linked to a modern harbor was developed. The government offered tax incentives and eliminated duties on equipment imported to produce goods for export which attracted many foreign firms to invest Taiwan in this period of time. This government-sponsored and foreign-financed redirection of the economy showed local Taiwanese entrepreneurs what was possible. By the late 1960s,

¹⁴ For more details, please see "The Taiwan Miracle" (Rubinstein 1994:3-9) in the book *The Other Taiwan*

Taiwan-based investors began to commit both their resources and their skills to the new spheres of economic opportunity. These firms began to link themselves to the world network by entering into joint ventures, by serving as subcontractors for Western or Japanese firms, and by undertaking direct export. By the early 1970s, the Taiwanese economy was booming, and soon the era was commonly called the “Taiwan Miracle” (Rubinstein 1994:9-10).

Yang (2008:66-67) argues that as a result of the movements of global capital, a consuming discourse of gender equality has replaced the state-centered discourse of domesticity and become the cultural dominant of the present. The invention and institution of the discourse of domesticity has to be situated within the nation-building project promulgated by the KMT since the 1950s, and its acceptance as popular ideology has to be contextualized within the global economic, political, and ethnic structures in Taiwan. Various social engineering projects, including Women’s Work (婦女工作), Building a Strong Nation through Virtuous Wives and Good Mothers Movement (齊家報國賢妻良母), and the Happy Family Movement (幸福家庭計畫), were instituted to implement the ideology of domesticity with the goal of recruiting women into national subjects for political mobilization (Yio 2000:11). Being the dominant discourse from the 1950s to the mid-1980s, the discourse of domesticity upholds the family as ‘the foundation of Chinese tradition and morality’. Women’s domestic role as virtuous wife and good mother takes on moral and political significance as it is central to the regeneration and reproduction of the nation (Yio 2000:11). This political view of domesticity converges with the development of the national economy as women are taught to be frugal in their management of the family and are encouraged to engage in home based part-time work, as promoted in the ‘Living Rooms as Factories Project’ (Yang 2008:66-67).

Radical social changes from 1970 to mid 1980

Taiwan's rapid industrial development also produced an urban revolution. This could be seen in the 1960s, and the trend accelerated during the 1970s. Cities such as Taipei in the north and Kaohsiung in the south became world-class cities boasting commercial centers and industrial facilities. As the agriculture sector became less important, many people moved to the suburbs and to the neighborhoods of the urban centers closest to their home villages. The transformed economy and the resulting changes in the distribution of wealth, the spread of education, the development of the major cities, and the rise of a new middle class all had their effects on the political realm. The KMT had engineered an economic "miracle" that in turn had produced a well-educated and increasingly comfortable middle class. However, by the 1960s and early 1970s, this middle class was becoming uncomfortable with the rigid and undemocratic regime (Rubinstein 1994:258-259). The year 1987 was a year of blossoming for democracy as well as for other social reform movements. That year, the world's longest regime of martial law was finally lifted (Lu 1994:330).¹⁵ Meanwhile, other social campaigns that had been brewing since the late 1960s, such as the fight for educational equality, calls for a changing family structure, and the rise of feminist thought,¹⁶ had direct or indirect influences on the alteration of women's social roles and lives (Yu 2004:384-387; Farris, Lee and Rubinstein 2004:10).

Education, family structure and feminist movement

Providing equal opportunity for education was a critical element in supporting social

¹⁵ Martial law was promulgated in May 19, 1949, and had been imposed throughout Taiwan for more than 38 years until it was lifted on July 15, 1987

¹⁶ A feminist movement in Taiwan first appeared in the Japanese colonial era; however it didn't gain much attention from the public until Hsiu-Lien Lu's propagation in the 1970s

changes. The nine-year compulsory education system has been enforced in Taiwan since 1968, allowing men and women enjoy equal rights to education (Yu et al. 2004:384). The improvement of educational opportunities for women also brought more job openings for women.¹⁷ Working Taiwanese women therefore became another source of income for their family households. Furthermore, the family structure in Taiwan has changed a lot in the past 30 years. Three generations living together in one house was common in Taiwan.¹⁸ However, the number of person per family dropped to an average of 3.33 in 2000; 3.25 in 2010 (National Statistics, R.O.C. 2013). The growth of the family economy and the reduced number of family members living in the same house impacted upon the family lifestyle, and helped to liberate women from endless housework.¹⁹

Feminists played a significant role in challenging the state discourse of domesticity. To some, confinement of women to the patriarchal family is seen as the root of women's oppression (Yang 2008:68). The pioneering Taiwanese feminist Yen-Lin Ku subdivides the autonomous women's movement since the 1970s into three stages (Chang 2009:12, 78):

- (1) Led by Hsiu-Lien Lu,²⁰ the first or "pioneering" stage lasted from 1972-1977
- (2) With the initial publication of the first feminist magazine, *Awakening*, in 1982, the second or "awakening" stage then lasted from 1982 through 1987
- (3) KMT lifted martial law in 1987, thus the post-martial law or third stage extends from 1987 to the present.

¹⁷ In 1984, there were only about 1.7 million married women who had jobs while there were 2.6 million in 2000 (Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, 2001)

¹⁸ Traditional big family where parents lived with their married children

¹⁹ The growth in a family's expendable income allowed for purchasing labor saving automatic machines, such as clothes washers and dryers, electric stoves, and rice cookers, which saved women considerable time so they could spend it with their families and for themselves

²⁰ Hsiu-Lien Lu is the first woman vice president of the Republic of China (from 2000 to 2008). Lu made a speech at the law school of National Taiwan University on the occasion of International Women's Day in 1972 which launched the autonomous women's movement in postwar Taiwan

Lu's founding of the movement was motivated by her sense of urgency to call into question the prevalent male-centered values in Taiwanese society and was an expression of her struggle for gender equity and social justice (Chang 2009:78). Lu's article "The traditional sex roles" was first published in a Taiwanese newspaper *the United Daily* in October 1971; it attracted wide attention for criticizing the stereotyped roles of the sexes.²¹ The definitive expression of Lu's feminist thought, *New Feminism*, was written in 1973 and published in 1974. It was regarded as the main text of Taiwan's feminist discourse in the 1970s.²² To disseminate her ideas, Lu made speeches on college campuses, organized panel discussions, and wrote articles for the major newspapers in Taiwan. Lu's newspaper articles convinced many intellectuals of the urgent need for social reform. Among the intellectuals who joined Lu's call were Yen-Lin Ku and Yuan-Chen Lee, both of whom would later play a pivotal role in launching *Awakening*, the first feminist magazine in Taiwan, during the 1980s (Yang 2007:376).

Lu herself mentioned the obstacles that existed everywhere during the initial stage of introducing feminism to Taiwan.²³ The idea of feminism was contrary to the KMT's women's policy²⁴ which aimed to preserve the patriarchal and Confucian tradition, and encouraged women to play supportive and subservient roles at home and in societies as well. In particular, while it was still under the Martial Law period, the continual harassment by the KMT was something beyond expectation and

²¹ Shortly afterward, she was invited to give a formal talk about feminism at the law school in National Taiwan University, and became a columnist in the *China Times* and many other journals (Lu 2004: 296)

²² Its content was subsequently revised and republished in 1977 and 1986 (Chang 2009:79)

²³ Criticisms made publicly and privately included the accusation that feminism was a heresy that would destroy traditional female virtues; that women's liberation merely borrowed from Western ideas; and even that the founder was abnormal because she was unmarried (Lu 2004: 294-295)

²⁴ Which was decided by the Office of Women's Activities of the central party under the leadership of Madame Chiang Kai-Shek

tolerance according to Lu (2004: 296).

Stereotypes in the U.S. media of Second Wave feminists as "bra-burners" and "man-haters" who are "sexually deviant" and "against family values," which were circulating in Taiwan in the 1970s, challenged Lu to claim a "local character" for her "new feminism," despite the fact that *New Feminism* was influenced by many key Western liberal thinkers. Unlike Western feminism, Lu claimed, Taiwan's "new feminism" promoted family harmony and was against sexual promiscuity (Yang 2007:376).

After Lu was imprisoned in 1979 for her political activities in the democracy movement,²⁵ Yuan-Chen Lee and her feminist associates established the Awakening Publishing House in 1982 to promote gender equity. Prior to the lifting of martial law in 1987, the Awakening Publishing House was the only non-government affiliated women's group in Taiwan that explicitly challenged gender hierarchy and advocated gender equality in the 1980s. The Awakening feminists considered the transformation of cultural values and belief systems an essential prerequisite for societal changes. Like their pioneering counterparts in the 1970s, the Awakening feminists wrote articles and organized lectures and panel discussions to offer possible solutions for resolving the problems of gender inequality. They heightened the Taiwanese public's awareness of specific women's issues after the mass media covered the events (Chang 2009:109-110).

While continuities in movement strategy from the authoritarian period to the post-martial law era existed, new strategies and feminist discourses also emerged in the context of Taiwan's democratization. With more socio-political spaces in which to express their views, feminists in the post-martial law era were less compromising with

²⁵ The Formosa Incident, or Kaohsiung Incident

Confucian-oriented gender roles than Hsiu-Lien Lu had been during the 1970s. Awakening feminists were explicitly critical of gender bias and authoritarian tendencies in the KMT's national education system. For example, Yuan-Chen Lee demanded that social studies textbooks emphasize the sharing of housework by male and female members of a family (Chang 2009:154). Furthermore, legislative lobbying became an essential component of feminist strategy in the post-martial law era. Since the 1980s, women's groups have had a hand in at least eight pieces of legislation, four of which they conceived and nursed through the legislative process themselves (Lee 2010).

In both the 1970s and 1980s, the autonomous women's movement was essentially an elite-sustained movement whose mission was to educate the public about the need for women's self-development and for great gender equality. Similar to their counterparts in the United States, most Taiwanese feminists of the Japanese colonial era and the post-1972 period were from upper- or middle-class backgrounds. Because of their educational and class backgrounds, most activists of women's movements can be regarded as the elite minority with a pro-woman agenda (Chang 2009:154).

1-1-3 Media, Consumption and Body-Beauty since the 1990s

The 1990s can be seen as a turning point in the Taiwanese media landscape. The KMT Central Standing Committee lifted Martial Law in 1987 and also lifted the ban on the formation of new political parties, signaling the true beginnings of Taiwan's democracy. The Taiwanese public, therefore, had a larger choice of newspapers and magazines to read after the abolition of restrictions on newspaper licensing and publishing (Tsai 2008:72). Prior to the 1990s, there were only three TV channels in Taiwan which all had strong "political colors." The Government Information Office

promulgated “Cable TV Legislation” in 1993, initializing the legalization of cable TV in Taiwan. Many foreign channels came to Taiwan soon after the promulgation, such as ESPN, CNN, Discovery Channel and HBO; meanwhile, several satellite television corporations were founded by local enterprises for producing various kinds of TV programs, which has led to the rise of more than one hundred TV channels in Taiwan.²⁶

Advertisement and the formation of Consuming Culture

Commercial advertisements, together with these emerging media, made foreign products, Western life style and sexy body images seem cool to the Taiwanese people for the first time.

Yang (2007:364) asserts that media, international women’s magazines in particular, intersect with feminist agenda in challenging the discourse of domesticity to promulgate a new form of femininity which depends upon women’s consuming power for liberation.²⁷ Western ad agencies such as Ogilvy & Mather, J. Walter Thompson, and Saatchi & Saatchi took over the market for advertising in Taiwan, using international women's magazines as forums to sell Western goods to women, with one-third to one-half of these magazines filled with advertisements from Christian Dior, Lancome, Estee Lauder, and so on.²⁸ While feminists have emphasized collective struggles for structural change, popular feminism relies on individual-based cultivation. The discourse of femininity relies on modernity to

²⁶ According to *The database of Taiwan Television* <http://tv.nccu.edu.tw/cableProgram.htm>

²⁷ The formation of a service economy with women entering into the workplace en masse, the liberalizing of the economy that opened Taiwan's domestic market to foreign goods, the lifting of restrictions on foreign-owned advertising companies, and the enforcement of intellectual property law made it possible for international women's magazines to come to Taiwan, changing Taiwan's women's magazine market as well as the content of the magazines (Yang 2007:364)

²⁸ Chinese-language versions of *Cosmopolitan*, *Elle*, *Marie Claire*, and *Bazaar* all started to appear in bookstores and on newsstands, targeting high school and college-educated, urban, and 20- to 35-year-old young women with consuming power as their readers (Yang 2007:364)

articulate a version of gender equality based on ‘woman power’ or ‘feminine power’ which is to be maintained through fashion consumption. Modernity is defined through women’s participation in the higher end of the service sector; their right to actively pursue sexual pleasure; and their consumption practices in different parts of the world. In order to constitute the new femininity, the media create its “other” as a counterexample, which is embodied in the figure of the thrifty, domestic woman who is bound by Chinese patriarchal tradition (Yang 2007; Yang 2011:235-237, 246).²⁹

The new image of women empowered by consuming products challenges the traditional women’s virtue of frugality. Meanwhile, another subversive impact on women’s gender image is the rise of the beauty industry. An intensive advertising campaign by the body-beauty industry in the 1990s initiated the trend of body-slimming and body-beauty among Taiwanese women. A woman’s body is constructed as a product on beauty-body advertisements, an object which can be altered through consuming.

The media discourse: An ideal woman should have an ideal body

The appreciation of body aesthetics/contour is not a tradition of Taiwanese and Chinese culture.³⁰ However, “body contour” and “thinness” have been becoming the criterion for evaluating women since the 1990s when the body-beauty industry started to rise abruptly. Since then, body-beauty (body-slimming, body-sculpturing) has been one of the hottest issues in Taiwanese society until today.

²⁹ Commercial discourses, including those advertisements of Nike, Armani, and Baiter Fashion, rely on this domestic woman for the articulation of a modern woman and promote consumption of Western commodities as the means of liberation from patriarchal tradition (Yang 2007; Yang 2011:235-237, 246)

³⁰ According to Confucian classic texts, modest appearance/manner (婦容) is one of the principal feminine virtues, however, there was not much emphasis on the training of the female body for body contour (Tsai:2009). Lin (1999) asserts that a slim female body was not commonly embraced prior to the 1970s when Taiwan was still a agrarian society. A strong and a bit plump female body was more preferred at that time since women’s bodies were primarily valued for its function of bearing offspring as well as for the ability to handle domestic work and farming.

Chu (1999) asserts that the advertisements brought by the prosperity of body-beauty (body-slimming in particular) industry in 1990s constitute an important phenomenon of the visual culture history in Taiwan. Take the year 1994 for example, the year that the noted body beauty institute *Famous International* (菲夢絲國際美容機構) invested more than \$10 million USD on advertisements and made a turnover of more than \$50 million USD for the whole year. Another famous company *Meidonfon* (媚登峰國際美容公司) invested more than \$8 million USD on advertisements (Du 2003:3-4), which gave its advertising slogan “Trust me, you can make it!” notoriety all over Taiwan (Wang 2012; Hsieh 2004).

The body-beauty industry set a new standard for the female body that is stricter than the medical standard. By doing this, they create an extensive business market because most women fall out of the standard, and need to be “transformed” by the service of the industry. The advertisements of the beauty industry urge women to change their bodies by consuming. They suggest that the change of body is a kind of self-expression, and that making yourself prettier leads to the enhancement of confidence (Du 2003; Chu 1999). Although not everyone can afford the service provided by body-beauty institutions, omnipresent advertisements have brought the new idea of consuming the body as a product, the new standard for assessing body and the messages regarding “women’s beauty” and “slimming body” to every part of Taiwan.

Feminist Naomi Wolf (1991) in her well-known book *The Beauty Myth* argues that beauty as a normative value is entirely socially constructed. In today’s mass media, “thinness” is promoted as the ideal female body image, or even the *only* “pretty” body image. Methods for losing weight, body-slimming, and body-sculpting continue to show up in various kinds of media, urging women to strive for the ideal

body.

For the case in Taiwan, Shen and Chu (2008:3-4) note that the mass media in Taiwan has been continuing to construct and represent an ideal body image that every modern woman should possess. Women unconsciously internalize these “ideal beauty” messages, and become active in seeking methods of altering their bodies so as to conform to the new social standard. Lin (1999) argues that on the one hand, the body-beauty industry reinforces the distinction between men and women’s bodies; on the other hand, it reconstructs it and converts the body of modern Taiwanese into a “post-modern body”, in which sexiness and consuming desire are the most important demands.

Not long after the lifting of Martial Law in 1987, the government lost its dominant influence over the mass media in constructing women’s gender image. The appreciation of body shape is not a tradition of Chinese culture, nor was the display of sexiness/feminine charm regarded as a criterion to judge the womanhood or the quality of being an ideal woman. However, soon after the lifting of Martial Law in 1987, a beautiful and sexy image of the modern women has been created by the body-beauty industry, marking an important switch in the evaluation of womanhood extending from inner virtues to appearance and slimness. Shaw (2012:88) asserts that “A ‘perfect woman’ or ‘ideal woman’ in the past may be a virtuous lady who takes good care of her family and domestic work; as for now, she has to be a slender beauty who never ages and whose every body part fits with the standard size.” The saying “There are no ugly women, only lazy women” which connotes the idea that “body discipline” is a woman’s responsibility, has been used widely in Taiwanese media. Traditional virtues are no more the primary criterion of being an ideal woman, and an attractive appearance (face and body contour) and sexiness has also been constructed

to be something desirable or “must-have” of a modern Taiwanese woman.

Influenced by this social atmosphere, women’s leisure and exercise has become intertwined with notions of body slimming, health and sexiness on Taiwanese media since the 1990s (Tsai 2009). Among other categories of leisure and exercise, women have embraced dance and stretching-based exercises such as yoga and pilates (Hsieh & Hsu 2012). Since more and more women think doing leisure dances is helpful to improve their body shape, the leisure dance/exercise industry continues to grow (Shen and Chu 2008:3-4). Belly dance was also promoted as a body-slimming exercise when it was introduced to Taiwan in 2002.

1-2 Belly dance for body-slimming and confidence-enhancing

Soon after the government started to pay attention to the importance of leisure exercise and health, and enacted corresponding policies and projects, the leisure exercise industry in Taiwan began to develop in the late 1980s. The advertisements launched by body-beauty industry ignited the beauty-slimming trend as well as the appearance-valuing atmosphere in Taiwanese society. However, the fees for most body-beauty institutions are too high for most people. In contrast, leisure exercise is perceived to be a more affordable and health way to build a nice body. Influenced by the social atmosphere, many leisure exercise/dance courses targeting women are particularly promoted for effects of weight-loss, body-slimming and body-sculpturing. Belly dance is an example of one of these courses, and has attracted a large number of mature Taiwanese women practitioners.

Belly dance derives from ethnic dances in the Middle East, but how does a traditional folk dance become a body-slimming and confidence-enhancing dance for modern women? In this section, I will review the globalization process of modern belly dance. Then I will examine the development and characteristic features of women's leisure exercise/dance in Taiwan. Third, I will review belly-dance-related studies in the West and in Taiwan.

1-2-1 Belly dance goes around the globe

In this section, I review the transforming and globalizing process of belly dance, to show how its multiple images and meanings have historically shifted.

Folklore, ancient religious myths, and pregnancy

Shay (1998: 39-40) asserts that Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria share a rich heritage of

Berber, Arab, and Turkish dance traditions. These traditions appear to have flourished during the French colonial period. Once Algeria became a French colony, its capital, Algiers, began to attract a number of visitors, especially from France. The cafés of Algiers became a resort for visitors and military personnel as well as for Algerians, and the female dancers seen there have been described in terms ranging from charming to lascivious. Some performed in the same costume worn by respectable women, while others appeared scantily clothed, to better display the isolated muscle contortions that have contributed to giving this dance its French name, *danse du ventre* (dance of stomach), which was later translated as belly dance. In the Arabic language the dance is called *Raqs el Sharqi* and in Turkish *Oryantal Dans*, both meaning oriental dance (Tsai 2009).

This dance incorporates movements such as pelvic lifts, hip rotations, and shoulder shimmies, which can be found in many ancient folk and social dances of North African and Middle Eastern countries. Muscle groups in the abdomen, spine, trunk, pelvis and neck are largely utilized in this dance.

Geographically, this dance genre has been understood to comprise styles of bodily movements that originated in the vast extension from north-west Africa and the Balkans in the West, to the eastern area of China, Central Asia, and the western portions of the Indian subcontinent in the east. In each of its areas of origin, the dance is characterized by improvised movements of the torso, hands, arms, and head. The specific portion of the body that forms the focus of the dance varies throughout this vast area (Shay and Sellers-Young 2003); regional folk movement practices may also be incorporated into performances, giving regional flavor to some of the dances (Shay 1998:344). The dance used to have a strong folkloric element since people perform it at weddings, festivals and family gatherings, where men dance as well as women

(Shay & Sellers-Young 2003).

Some scholars believe the movements of the traditional dance could also be found in daily life of Middle Eastern and North African women. While carrying jars, bags and trays upon their heads, the women could walk calmly and gracefully, turning about without dropping the object. The ability to move in such a manner came from the centering that these women developed in the lower part of the belly, allowing for flexible and free movement of the pelvis (Al-Rawi 2003). Because the movements stretched a woman's muscles and trained her to breathe rhythmically through the stomach flutters and to isolate and control various muscles, many people believe the dance may also have a strong connection to pregnancy and child birth (Fisher 2003).

According to the introduction of Danse Du Ventre in the *International Encyclopedia of Dance* (Shay 1998:344), no historical documentation exists for the origins of this genre, which today is performed in many homes by both men and women and in cabarets and clubs by women throughout the Arabic world and in areas to which they have migrated. Similar dance genres also exist in Turkey and Greece.

Most American popular writings on belly dance include a section tracing the ancient origins of belly dance and establishing the dance form as the oldest known to humanity (Al-Rawi 1999; AlZayer 2004; Buonaventura 1998; Copeland 2000; Djoumahna 2000; Hobin 2003; Mishkin & Schill 1973; Mourat 2000; Stewart 2000). The oldest claim of the dance's origins comes from a feminist dancer Gioseffi (1980), who traces the dance's origins to Upper Paleolithic Venus figurines. Many authors who seek to link modern belly dance to primeval origins cite archaeological research as evidence for this claim, such as reliefs, tomb paintings and pottery depicting dancers as evidence of ancient belly dance in ritual contexts (Djoumahna 2000: 10; Haynes-Clark 2010; Hobin 2003: 41-42; Mourat 2000: 42).

In academia, although some studies have explored the developing history of belly dance, scholars have not reached a consensus regarding its origin. Dance scholars such as Sachs (1937) and Buonaventura (1990) have related the origin of belly dance to ancient religion myths, and to the worship of the goddess of fertility. However, other scholars have criticized this blind adherence to a weakly supported narrative of the ancient origins of belly dance that relies on Orientalist stereotypes (Dox 2005; Haynes-Clark 2010; Jarmakani 2008; Shay 2008; Shay and Sellers-Young 2005). Shay (1998:345) pointed out that authors with Orientalist fervor have speculated on ancient, even prehistoric, origins. The speculation reflects, in part, the abundance of pictorial evidence for solo dancing that exists from Pharaonic Egypt, pre-Islamic Iran, and ancient Mesopotamia. However, ancient dance movements cannot be reconstructed from still representations of the human figure. The Orientalist accounts of exotic ancient religious rites, goddess worship, and birthing rituals that circulate in the West have not been substantiated by scholars. The dance, as presented in current cabaret manifestations, reflects relatively modern sources, particularly those used for music and costume.

The history of belly dance since the 19th century: The “Oriental Other”

Scott (1998:44) asserts that “The term Orientalism refers to the adaptation or affectation in Western art of what are assumed to be the customs, traits, or habits of expression characteristics of the people of the Near East and Asia. These are usually defined as a different form or opposed to Western cultural characteristics. The term Orientalism entered popular usage in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries because of broad political and academic interest in the languages, religions, histories, and social structures of Asian and Middle Eastern societies during that

period. Linked to the Western fascination with the exotic, Orientalism in the arts developed as part of the nineteenth-century Romantic movement in poetry, literature, painting, music, theater, and dance. The writings of colonial administrators and scholars and reports of merchants and travelers augmented popular notions of the East as a land of excessive riches, opulence, indolence, sensuality, and cruelty. Many artists and writers at that time used oriental themes and characters, strengthening the role of the Orient as a setting for Western fantasies.”

Women dancing in front of other women or intimate family members has been described as the authentic representation of the dance (Rasmussen 2005:199). Nevertheless, after the encounter with colonial rulers, belly dance dramatically transformed almost exclusively into a spectacle for male entertainment (Haynes-Clark (2010; Lorus 1990: 10; Shay 2008: 132-134).

The French controlled Morocco from 1912 to 1956, Algeria from 1830 to 1962 and Tunisia from 1881 to 1956. The colonial administration in these countries established an infrastructure that would support the economy of tourism. Some reports indicate that the French colonists in North African nations made the professional dancers perform naked and encouraged hyper-sexualized presentations of the dance (Najwa 2005:47). At French military bases established near oases, some local women performed for soldiers. These oases eventually became tourist attractions for travelers. From the late 19th century to early 20th century, Western travelers, writers and painters produced Orientalist images of Eastern women in travel literature, paintings, photographs and postcards. American dancers have continued to be influenced by these Orientalist images until the present day (Shay 1998; Haynes-Clark 2010).

The image of the Oriental dancing girl emerged from the profusion of stereotypes that made little distinction between Eastern popular dancers and the

ancient class of sacred and ritual dancers.³¹ Scott (1998:45) asters that few Parisian cafés presented Algerian dancers, but it was the importation of authentic Eastern performers to European and the U.S. expositions and world's fairs that ignited popular interest in Oriental dance. During the 1876 American Centenary Exposition in Philadelphia, a Turkish coffee house on the outskirts of the park grounds featured a group of traditional Turkish musicians and dancers. The troupe, prevented from performing by the police, appeared briefly in a Philadelphia vaudeville house and later in New York City. On a larger scale, the Chicago World's Fair of 1893 exhibited several Eastern performance styles to a large segment of the American public. Moorish, Syrian, Turkish, and Persian groups performed, but the Algerian and Egyptian women presenting the *danse du ventre* became objects of protest by the clergy and the National Association of Dancing Masters.

When performers arrived from the Middle East to perform at the Fair, they brought a form of the dance that had already been altered by the influences of European colonialism, foreign tourism, and Orientalist discourse. The protest enhanced the popularity of the performances, and the “shocking” and “indescribable” movements were promptly imitated in dance halls, vaudeville, strip clubs and burlesque houses which discredited belly dance for the next several decades (Kraus 2010ab; Shay and Sellers-Young 2003; Carlton 1994). Around the 1950s, highly sexualized versions of belly dance, which were influenced by the Oriental elements of Hollywood films and other Orientalist work, were exported back to the Middle East and featured in nightclub venues marketed towards tourists and presented as the local dance. This version of the dance was then imported back West as a Middle East tradition (Haynes-Clark 2010).

³¹ Dancers of ancient class such as the *devadasi* in India and the *almah* in the Near East (Scott 1998:45)

The women's liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s was an important moment that transformed the interpretation of belly dance in American society. The belly dance was adopted by feminists as a more liberated approach toward physical expression and exploration of femininity (Shay and Sellers-Young 2005; Deagon 2005; Forner 1996; Rasmussen 2005). Around the same period of time, belly dance grew both as a performance in ethnic restaurants and a participatory activity in classes. Since the late 1970s, belly dance has grown markedly as a participatory activity, in part because of its value as a form of women's exercise (Downey et al. 2010).

Besides dance and physical fitness, these days the American belly dance community promotes an inclusive body image, empowerment, and self-acceptance as core values. In order to obtain a sense of empowered femininity and confidence, the belly dance community encourages a form of liberation attained through elevated self-image judged from within. Jarmakani (2006:159-160) calls this trend "New Liberation." New Liberation focuses on inner personal thoughts about body image, rather than questioning the power structures that suppress women's access to equal rights.³² Some licensed dance/movement therapists who know belly dance brought the movements and ideals into their work with clients suffering from disorders related to body image or sexual identity (Healing through Oriental Dance 2013; Bellydance and Breast Cancer 2013; Belly Dance and Healing from Sex Trauma 2013). By the 1980s, a strong and active community of professional and amateur belly dancers was firmly established, and the new meaning and way of performance of belly dance, which was newly created in the United States but regarded as a Middle Eastern dance tradition, quickly spread overseas by globalization with the new communication technology (Oatley 1999; Sellers-Young 1992). Table 1-1 shows my rendition of the

³² The second-wave feminists (early 1960s to late 1970s) saw women's cultural and political inequalities as inextricably linked and encouraged women to understand aspects of their personal lives as deeply politicized and as reflecting sexist power structures (Kroløkke, C. and Sørensen, A. C. 2006)

changing images of belly dance since the late 19th century.

Table 1-1 Changes in the belly dance since the late 19th century

Time	Event	Image of belly dance
Late 19 c.	Colonial influence	Orientalist, exotic, erotic, sexual
	Oriental travel literature, painting, photography, and postcards	
1894	Chicago World's Fair	
1920s	Developing striptease and burlesque industries in the US	
1950s-	Hollywood	
	Nightclubs and music halls opened in urban Egypt	
1960-1970	Middle Eastern nightclubs and restaurants in the US	entertainment, liberation, empowerment
	Feminist movement	
1980-	Formation of American belly dance community	fitness, performance, self-acceptance, New Liberation
	New dance style	
	Leisure exercise industry	
	Internet and technology facilitate the global spread of belly dance	
	alternative values / alternative therapy	

1-2-2 Women's leisure exercise/dance in Taiwan

In Taiwan today, leisure dance courses are provided in various places, such as sports centers, fitness clubs, community universities³³ and dance studios, where the courses

³³ Community university is a kind of local institute for adult education in Taiwan which offers a lot classes of life skill, dance and exercise. There are 99 Community universities in Taiwan as of 2013. (National Association for the Promotion of Community universities, NAPCU <http://www.napcu.org.tw/website/>, accessed July 10th 2013)

are usually promoted as healthy exercise with the added benefit of body-slimming. However, the fact that “dance” became accessible to the public is a novel phenomenon to Taiwan. Considering dance as a healthy or body-slimming exercise was rarely heard of just thirty years ago.

Dance was not an important part of the daily lives of most Taiwanese.³⁴ Dancing performance was even perceived negatively in the past due to the legacy of traditional norms. Tai (2012:68) noted that the place and role of dance in education and in society has undergone a tremendous change in Taiwan in the last century. In the late nineteenth century, dance was never considered a ‘serious business’ and performers were disdained as low-level professionals due to a traditional bias against body movements. However, the socio-political influence exerted by governments during the Japanese colonial era (1895–1945) and subsequent martial law period (1949–1987) led to a rethinking of the value of dance in Taiwanese society (Lu 1995a; Tsai 2003). Three phases were especially important in this regard. First, the Japanese colonial government introduced western dance forms such as ballet in the 1930s to 1940s as part of a campaign to modernize the island’s education system. Then, after the KMT had gained sovereignty in Taiwan following World War II, Chinese culture and a Chinese identity were forcefully imposed on the population. Thus, Chinese classical dance and Chinese ethnic minorities’ dances were greatly promoted during the martial law period (Lu 1995a, 1995b). Finally, American modern dance started to gain popularity in Taiwan during the 1960s when American dance companies such as those headed by Alvin Ailey (in 1962) and José Limón (in 1963) performed in Taiwan as part of the US-ROC (Republic of China) cultural exchange projects.

³⁴ Indigenous people of Taiwan have rich and diverse tradition of dancing and singing, however, there is almost no folk dance tradition among Han Taiwanese (Lee and Yu 2005)

Dance as a discipline in higher education in Taiwan began during the post-World War II period with the establishment of the Department of Dance at Chinese Culture College (which is now Chinese Culture University or CCU) in 1964. Since that time, higher education programs at CCU and elsewhere have followed a rigid curriculum which emphasizes training in ballet, modern dance and Chinese dance, all of which are requirements for anyone who wishes to study dance for an academic degree.³⁵ Dance courses such as jazz dance, tap dance and social dances are all non-major electives. Before the 1980s, dance was still a field exclusively for those who took it as a major or profession (Tai 2012:67). Not until the rise of the leisure exercise industry and the emergence of “leisure dance” as a new business did dance become accessible to the Taiwanese public in large.

The rise of leisure exercise industry

From 1970-1984, economic growth has influenced the household consumption patterns of Taiwanese families.³⁶ With the rapid economic growth of the early 1990s, people grew more concerned about their health and quality of life, in which the participation in leisure physical activities has been more desirable (Yu et al. 2004:387). In response to this social need, many TV programs began to promote exercise, resulting in an increase of leisure sport/exercise participation by both men and women (Tsai 2009:51).

In contrast to the expensive membership and program fees charged by body-beauty institutions, leisure exercise is a more economical approach for pursuing

³⁵ Up until today, six universities in Taiwan have established departments of dance

³⁶ During this period, Taiwan's economic growth rate averaged 9.23% and per capita GNP rose from US\$389 to US\$3,167; the ratio for clothing and meals has been reduced from 50% to 28.79% (1960–2000) while the ratio for leisure and recreation has increased from 5.47% to 18.95% (Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, <http://www.dgbas.gov.tw/mp.asp?mp=1>, accessed July 10th, 2013)

a better body. Traditional Chinese culture doesn't think highly of either physical activities or leisure exercise,³⁷ and there were even more barriers against women to physical activities than men.³⁸ With an equal opportunity to obtain education since the 1970s, Taiwanese women have become more aware of the importance of participation in physical activities for various health benefits (Yu et al. (2004:384-385).

Moreover, the development of fitness clubs has provided more choices of exercise to Taiwanese people.³⁹ In the late 1970s, Mei-Cho Kuo introduced a fitness gymnastics program from Japan, and her program is regarded as the predecessor of rhythmic gymnastics centers and fitness clubs in Taiwan. According to Chen (1993) and Yang (1996), the first well equipped fitness club in Taiwan, Clark Fitness Club (克拉克健身俱樂部) was established in 1980. The club introduced American-style training programs as well as the strategies of management to Taiwan. Jia-Zu Rhythmic Dance Center (佳姿韻律中心) and Ya-Zu Health World (雅姿健康世界) are the first two studios providing exercise programs exclusively for women in the early 1980s.⁴⁰ In 1986, the pioneering promoter of Taiwanese aerobics, Hwe-Lan Chiang, founded Chong-shin Fitness Club (中興健身俱樂部) and opened up the prosperity of fitness industry in Taiwan. Soon after, fitness clubs serving various

³⁷ The belief of Confucianism that 'efficiency comes from diligence and failure from frivolity' has constrained the recreational opportunities available to the people of Taiwan, particularly women in the past (Tsai 2006:470). Besides, a well-known Taiwanese idiom "More Brawn than Brain" also reflects the negative attitude toward people who are good at physical activities

³⁸ This traditional culture has resulted in constraints on women's leisure, particularly that involving physical activity, because in Confucianism, appreciation of the beauty of the human body is non-existent. It is forbidden for women to show large parts of the body or even to talk about the human physique. Women are not encouraged to go out alone or to expose their bodies (Tsai 2006:469-470)

³⁹ According to the survey done by Aerobic Fitness and Health Association of R.O.C. in the year of 2000, there were 129 fitness clubs in Taiwan, and the number of fitness club members was close to one percent of the total population (<http://www.afha.org.tw/>, accessed July 10th, 2013)

⁴⁰ Later on, both of them changed their business to fitness club which serves both men and women

target groups were established one after another.⁴¹ In 2007, the global fitness franchise “Curves”, which is famous for its “women only” environment, opened its first center in Taiwan. Responding to the rise of Taiwanese women’s exercise participation, the number of its branches increased to 71 by 2013.⁴²

Government’s attention to leisure exercise and health

The term “sport council (體育委員會)” first appeared in 1932 as the highest sport administration in the history of the Republic of China. Yet, the council could not fulfill its function because of the outbreak of war.⁴³ In 1973, the Department of Physical Education was established by the Ministry of Education with the purpose of fostering the domestic climate of sports/exercise as well as cultivating top athletes who can win honors for Taiwan in international games.⁴⁴

With the improvement of technology and medicine, the population of senior citizens around the world is increasingly dramatically, which in turn has produced many health and economic challenges (Yu et al. 2004: 386). Taiwan has been an “aging society” since 1993 and more Taiwanese people have become aware of the importance of living a healthy lifestyle.⁴⁵ Since the mid-1990s, the scope of national sports policies has been broadened from the concentration on athletic sports to the promotion of leisure sports/exercise as well as improving the health and welfare of the public.⁴⁶ In 2001, the government reduced the number of working days from six days to five days per week for government workers in Taiwan; thereafter, most industries

⁴¹ There were 138 exercise/fitness clubs in Taiwan as of 2000 (Wang 2006:308, 313)

⁴² Curves for women, <http://www.curves.com.tw/index.asp> , accessed July 10th 2013.

⁴³ The Chinese Civil War (1927-1950)

⁴⁴ Brief History of the Department of Physical Education <http://www.sa.gov.tw/english/index.aspx>
Date accessed August 10th 2013.

⁴⁵ By the end of 2011, there were more than 2.52 million seniors, accounting for about 10.89% of the Taiwanese population (Sports Administration, Ministry of Education) <http://www.sa.gov.tw/>, accessed July 10th, 2013

⁴⁶ The founding prospects of Sports Administration, Ministry of Education <http://www.sa.gov.tw/>

also followed the policy of five working days. This policy has provided Taiwanese people more free time to spend on leisure activities. Different attitudes toward leisure exercise have become popular. In the past, the saying ‘If you do not work for one day, then you don’t have any food for that day’ was generally accepted in Taiwanese society. However, two common sayings now are, ‘Take a break for move ahead’, and ‘Appropriate physical activity can relieve physical and mental stress and promote work efficiency’ (Yu et al. 2004: 387).

The Department of Sports for All was established in 1997 under the governance of the Sports Affairs Council (SAC), Executive Yuan, the highest administration of sport and physical education.⁴⁷ The Department of Sports for All of SAC was designed to promote public sports/exercise, and house several large-scaled projects that have been undertaken to cultivate the concept of lifelong sports and exercise. The six-year ‘Sports Population Multiplication Plan (運動人口倍增計劃),’ implemented from 2002 to 2007, added around 2.75 million people to the rank of those who participate in sports regularly.⁴⁸ The primary goals of the ‘Sports Population Multiplication Plan’ were to develop sport participation from the bottom up, utilizing community resources, integrating grass roots sport professionals, and promoting community sport activities.⁴⁹

The ‘Sports Population Multiplication Plan’ gives Taiwanese women more opportunities to enrich their knowledge about the importance of physical activities, to utilize the local sport facilities, and to further maintain regular exercise habits (Yu et

⁴⁷ Executive Yuan is the highest level of the executive branch in Taiwan.

⁴⁸ The county and city governments are the major channels for National Council on Physical Fitness and Sports to implement the ‘Sports Population Multiplication Plan’, including continually hosting sporting activities, the integration and utilization of social resources, and the encouragement of regular exercise habits (Yu et al. 2004: 388)

⁴⁹ SAC launches the inspection visits of the sports population multiplication plan, 22 November 2002. Available online at: <http://www.sa.gov.tw/>, accessed July 10th, 2013

al.2004:388). In order to insure women's right to exercise, the promotion of women's exercise or leisure participation has since 2007 been included in the Annual Major Administrative Plan of SAC every year.⁵⁰ Increased budget outlays have been invested in promoting women's leisure exercise participation.⁵¹

'Build up a Sports Island' is a new six-year project initiated in 2010. This project sponsors local government and non-governmental groups to organize leisure exercise courses designed for women, referred to as the "Women Slimming Exercise Plan".⁵² An estimated 264,525 female participants were registered in this plan in the year 2010. According to Sports Administration, the purpose of the plan is to encourage more women to develop regular exercise habits, lose weight, achieve a standard body mass index (BMI), and become healthier (Hsieh and Hsu 2012).

Dance/Exercise for a nice body

Similar to the implications of this plan, women's leisure exercise has been intertwined with notions of weight loss, body beauty, health and sexiness in Taiwanese media since the 1990s. Tsai (2009:47) pointed out that ideologies with regard to fitness and 'the look' are reinforced throughout women's lives through a variety of advertisements. Especially following the arrival of cable TV in 1994, a large number of programs promote fitness and a 'sexy' female body image directly or indirectly. The idea of exercise is blurred with the notions of being slim, healthy, and sexy, while the 'mixed-up' idea of exercise, health and sexiness is constantly exploited in advertising and the visual media. Moreover, women's magazines in Taiwan promise

⁵⁰ SAC Annual Report 2007-2010 (Appendix 1-1)

⁵¹ In 2007, the budget for promoting women's exercise was twenty million (TWD); the budget went up to forty million (TWD) in 2008 (Gender Statistics of Sports Administration, Ministry of Education <http://www.sa.gov.tw/>), accessed July 10th, 2013

⁵² Including cycling, exercise walking, aerobic dance, yoga, Taiji, Yuanji dance, etc. (SAC Annual Report 2011)

fitness and shapely bodies through exercise. Representations of a slim female body as sexually desirable appear to be profitable and abundant. The R.O.C. Statistics of Sports in 2011 also found the first purpose for the public to do exercise is “for health”; the second is “for good shape.”⁵³

Among various leisure exercises, leisure dance and stretch gymnastics are especially popular among women (Chang and Chen 2012:116; Hsieh and Hsu 2012). As mentioned in the previous section, the pioneering leisure dance courses in Taiwan taught rhythmic gymnastics and aerobics in private studios. Up until recently, institutions providing leisure dance courses could be classified into several categories, such as: community based venues (community sports center, community universities and community centers); fitness clubs; dance studios; and civic associations (YMCA, China Youth Corps⁵⁴). The category of courses offered has also largely extended from aerobic dances to other pop dances (like street dance, hip-hop, new jazz, zumba), social dance, exotic dances (salsa, Tahitian dance, flamenco dance, Indian dance, belly dance, Hawaiian Hula, African dance) as well as body works such as yoga, Pilates and martial arts (Tai chi, Brazilian martial arts). Previous studies have noted that the enthusiastic participation of office ladies and housewives is the key to the prosperity of the leisure dance market in Taiwan (Shen and Chu 2008:6). In contrast to traditional dance training, dancing experience is not a requirement for leisure dance courses, thus everybody can participate simply through consumption— you just have to pay the course fee. For general female consumers, the purpose of taking leisure dance courses is not for becoming professional dancers, but rather for fun, for a hobby, for relaxation, for fitness or body slimming (Shen and Chu 2008; Lee 2007). Some

⁵³ The R.O.C. Statistics of Sports is a government report issued every year
http://www.sa.gov.tw/resource/publication/549_2013_2_1_101+Final.pdf, accessed July 10th, 2013

⁵⁴ 中國青年救國團

studies assert that being influenced by media advertisement and the body-slimming trend, many female consumers become fond of leisure dance not just for health, but for pursuing a fitness body and for losing weight (Ge 2009:69; Shen and Chu 2008; Chu 1999). We can find the emphasis on body-slimming effects from the promotion flyer (Figure 1-1) as well as the names of many leisure dance courses (Figure 1-2). Even exotic dance courses are frequently promoted for their workout effects, which makes those classes look like a fashion body-slimming product wrapped by exoticism (Tsai 2009:8). This is the background when belly dance was introduced to Taiwan as a women's body-slimming exercise with a sense of Middle Eastern exoticism.



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<p>136 18:00-18:55 MV 百匯有氣 靈兒 12 週 2160 元</p>	<p>236 18:00-18:55 拉丁熱舞 Thinking 12 週 2160 元</p>				
<p>137 18:00-18:55 拳擊有氣 Amy 阿吉 12 週 2160 元</p>	<p>237 18:00-18:55 團體瑜珈 Abby 12 週 2160 元</p>	<p>247 18:00-18:55 強力健身有氣 Magpie 12 週 2160 元</p>	<p>337 18:00-18:55 MV 熱舞 SNSD+Got A Boy Nicky 12 週 2160 元</p>	<p>347 18:00-18:55 拳擊有氣 Keiko 12 週 2160 元</p>	<p>437 18:00-18:55 瑜珈進修 緣如 12 週 2160 元</p>
<p>138 20:00-20:55 強力健身有氣 Livia 12 週 2160 元</p>	<p>148 20:00-20:55 團體瑜珈 Fish 12 週 2160 元</p>	<p>238 20:00-20:55 New Jazz Livia 12 週 2160 元</p>	<p>338 20:00-20:55 團體瑜珈 Cindy 12 週 2160 元</p>	<p>348 20:00-20:55 新多杰健身有氣 Carol 12 週 2160 元</p>	<p>438 20:00-20:55 新舞社技舞 小貓 12 週 2160 元</p>
			<p>448 20:00-20:55 拳擊有氣 Jeff 12 週 2160 元</p>	<p>538 20:00-20:55 MV 熱舞 舞亞針-Super Girl Livia 12 週 2160 元</p>	

● 標示時課程表示課程會使用塑膠球上課(教室有提供), 但非每次必用 ● 可加購自用塑膠球\$100, 瑜珈墊\$400
 優惠條件備註: 限同一人報名第二班方可享有優惠; 若因個人因素第二班辦理轉讓或保留, 將扣除優惠金額; 若因主辦單位因素停班或併班, 將退回扣除優惠金額之餘額

Figure 1-1 Courses provided by AT Aerobics team in spring 2013

Note: "Body-beauty" terms are used in the name of many classes such as Class 438-Slim belly dance, Class 148 Slim-body yoga and Class 447 Body-beauty aerobics

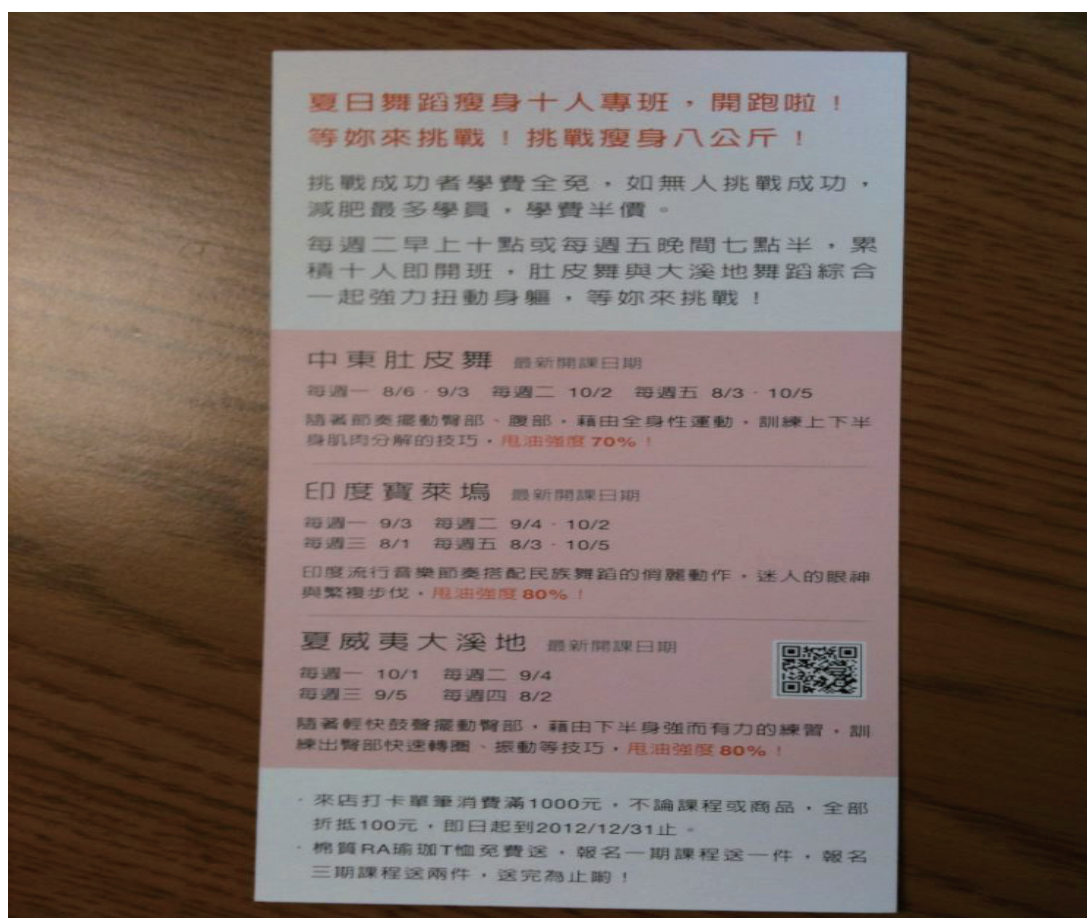


Figure 1-2 Promotion DM of Butterfly Dance Studio

Note: On the top of the DM writes “Summer slim-body dance program begins! Waiting for you! Challenge to get rid of 8kg!” The program including Middle Eastern belly dance class (effectiveness of body-slimming 70%), Indian Bollywood dance (80%) and Hawaiian Tahiti dance (80%)

1-2-3 Reviews of belly dance studies

In the previous two sections, I reviewed women's gender role transitions in Taiwan, the globalization of belly dance and the developing process and features of women's leisure exercise in Taiwan. In this section, I'm going to review previous studies about belly dance.

Belly dance did not get much attention from scholars until about 20 years ago. Nowadays, the majority of studies related to belly dance are done by Western scholars with a focus on subjects in the United States (majority), the Middle East and North Africa. So far, most studies came from the fields of history, dance studies, sociology, anthropology, women's studies, and health science. The research topics can be divided into the following categories: history, representations, gender, body politics, fitness, spirituality and religion.

Studies exploring the ancient history of belly dance usually relate the origin of belly dance to ancient religion and myths based on archeological findings or suppositions (Karayanni 2009; Al-Rawi 2003; Hobin 2003; Helland 2001; Buonaventura 1998; Hanna 1988; Gioseffi 1980; Sachs 1937). Traveling literature, paintings and post cards and Hollywood's Oriental movies were largely analyzed to how the East was perceived Westerners' eyes during the late 19th to early 20th century (Davies 2005; Rasmussen 1992; Monty 1986; Flaubert 1972). Scholars also noted the varied images of belly dance represented in its developing history, differences among belly dance schools are widely discussed in terms of their dancing style, costumes, subculture and so on (Potuoğlu-Cook 2006; Usner 2001).

Many of these studies involve discussions of the ideologies or factors which have contributed to the changing representations of belly dance, such as colonialism, Orientalism, tourism, self-exoticism, feminism, globalization, imperialism,

postmodernism, and etc. (Maira 2008; Dox 2006; Jarmakani 2006; Dougherty 2005; Swanson 2005; Fisher 2003; Shay and Sellers-Young 2003; Oatley 1999; Forner 1996; Sellers-Young 1992). Various issues raised by an uncovered body are also widely discussed (Kraus 2010a, 2010b; Keft-Kennedy 2005; Deaver 1978). The physical and psychological benefits of belly dancing have also caught scholars' attention in the past 10 years,⁵⁵ benefits frequently referred to include toning, fitness, posture modification, improving self-esteem and a healthier body image (Downey et al. 2010; Sellers-Young 2005; Holland 2004; Crobsy 2000) as well as the connection with spirituality (Kraus 2009; Dox 2005; Christopher 2000; Stewart 2000).

Belly dance in Taiwan

Americanized belly dance went global in the 1980s, and soon thereafter came to East Asia. Belly dance had arrived to Japan by the late 1980s (Shay and Sellers-Young 2003), a very first belly dance course was taught in Singapore in 1996;⁵⁶ in South Korea, a dancer started performing belly dance in 1997, and the first belly dance academy was founded in 2003;⁵⁷ the first belly dance club in China opened in 2000.⁵⁸

The first person to actively herald belly dance in Taiwan was Wan-Ru Lee, a Taiwanese woman who learned the dance in the Middle East (Tsai 2009; Arabesque Bellydance 2013). In just about a decade, this exotic dance has spread all over Taiwan.⁵⁹ News regarding belly dance frequently appeared in the mass media. On the

⁵⁵ There are also many experience sharing about the health benefits of belly dancing on the internet



⁵⁶ Claribel's Raks Sharki Studio http://www.bellydanceinsingapore.com/bio_claribel.htm

⁵⁷ Belly Korea http://www.bellykorea.com/sub/eng_sub01.php?var=page0102

⁵⁸ In the beginning, the dance was promoted in an alternative name "Slimming waist dance" (纖腰舞) since the Chinese government perceived the the term "belly dance" negatively and was concerned the dance may corrupt public morals (Resource cited from WKX belly dance <http://www.dupiwu.com/>), accessed July 10th, 2013

⁵⁹ Tsai (2009) points out that "exoticism" is usually emphasized by belly dance promoters. For example, belly dancing classes of community university entitled 'Exotic, enthusiastic, and charming belly dance' (Songsshan Community university 2010) and 'Dance of exotic women' (Tayuan Community university 2010)

bookstore shelves, it is easy to find non-academic publications and DVDs (Figure 1-3, 1-4) instructing how to do belly dancing, or how to acquire a slender body shape through belly dancing.⁶⁰ Several scholars assert that belly dance has grown rapidly to be an emerging leisure dance among Taiwanese women (Lee 2007; Chen 2007; Chang 2009; Tsai 2009; Ge 2009).

	
<p>Figure1-3 Instructing book and DVD for belly dancing</p>	<p>Figure1-4 Instructing book and DVD for belly dancing</p>

“A study on the development of belly dance” was the first academic paper exploring the development of Taiwanese belly dance (Lee 2007). The author, Po-Chan Lee, concluded that, as times changed, the values of health and female self-expression soon made Taiwanese women embrace belly dancing, to the extent that it even became one of the most popular leisure dances. Lee argues that the potential market is enormous because of its combined advantage of weight loss, toning and posture modification. Moreover, Lee argues that solo belly dance performance is considered

⁶⁰ Such as Slim Body Belly Dance (2004); Losing Weight in Seven Days by Belly Dancing (2010); Fascinating Body-Beauty Belly Dance (2011); Mesmerizing 28 Days: Weight-loss Method of Belly Dance (2011); The Best in the History: Belly Dance for Body-Trimming (2011); Dance for Slenderness (2012)

more entertaining for the spectator in comparison with other dance genres. However, Lee also pointed out that Taiwanese teachers often create new combinations by mixing different dance styles with belly dance, such as Latin dance or aerobics. According to Lee, there are not many teachers and resources available for people who want to learn authentic belly dance. The author therefore suggests that aspiring dancers to go to the Middle East for pursuing further skills, or the community should regularly hold international workshops in Taiwan to improve their knowledge and performance of the dance.

In “A Study on the Current Developments of Belly Dance in Taiwan 2007,” Chen (2007) uses both qualitative and quantitative methods to explore the development of belly dance in Taiwan in 2007. Chen makes four findings: (1) The number of belly dance associations founded or in preparation in 2007 increased to twice the previous year’s number; (2) over 70% of Community universities offered belly dance classes in the second semester of 2007, with an average class number of 2.5; (3) workshops taught by foreign instructors were held with an average of one class every 1.7 months; Fusion and Oriental were the most common dance styles;⁶¹ (4) belly dance competitions were held very often, at a rate of one competition every 1.5 months on average. Based on the study, Chen concludes that belly dance has become a prominent leisure dance in Taiwan, especially among women.

“Glamorous Dance in Taiwan: Two Myths about Women’s Bodies”⁶² was the first article exploring the correlation between the belly dance trend and women’s body aesthetics in Taiwan.⁶³ The author Xiau-Hung Chang claims that belly dance is

⁶¹ Oriental, Fusion and ATS (American Tribal Style) are three popular belly dance styles. Oriental is the traditional form that can be mainly separated to Egyptian, Turkish and Lebanese style; Fusion features to melt belly dance with other dance forms, like jazz or flamenco; ATS is a new style created in the United States that put many tribal elements in choreography, costume and music

⁶² Chang (2009)

⁶³ This paper was primarily published on United Daily News and aroused much attention. Later

currently the most popular leisure dance in Taiwan and illustrates with some examples.⁶⁴ One is the “Celebration of Justice,” a belly dance show performed by eight female court judges, which captured the attention of the media at the time. Moreover, she mentions that from temple festivals to college galas, belly dance performances became a fixture at all sorts of social events. Chang also argues that previous to the introduction of belly dancing, few dances in Taiwan had found as many followers among women of different age groups and social classes. Young girls and elderly women alike got involved in it, and it was danced everywhere from fashionable clubs to community parks and nursing homes. As for the key to its appeal to Taiwanese women, Chang asserts it might reside in the fact that belly dance is the best exercise for training the waist and the hips, which are the most critical area for the modern body aesthetics. In addition, Chang argues that belly dance totally reverses the predominant aesthetic standard—the worship of the slim and young body, because the dance originally favours plump dancers, thus giving older women more opportunity to take part.⁶⁵

In “Sexy Dancer or Productive Goddess?” Tsai (2009) argues that leisure, exercise, weight loss and exoticism occasioned the main appeal of belly dance for women, based on her own experience of learning and teaching the dance.⁶⁶ Tsai expressed it is ironic that weight loss and figure shaping have come to be marketed as the greatest benefits of belly dance whereas a dancer of a well-rounded body was more preferred. Tsai doesn’t agree with Xiau-Hung Chang’s point of views that belly dance “reverses the predominant aesthetic standard.” On the contrary, she argues that

included in *Forum in Women’s and Gender Studies* published by Women Research Center of National Taiwan University

⁶⁴ Xiau-Hung Chang is a Taiwanese essayist, a famous feminist, and a professor of modern literature in National Taiwan University

⁶⁵ Since slender dancers are preferred by most dance genres

⁶⁶ Shi-Zen Tsai is a belly dance (Oriental dance) instructor of community university. She learned the dance from Arabian and French teachers while she was studying in France

Orientalism never disappeared, and that the influence of mainstream values of body image should not be underestimated either. The author also poses questions on the quality of training of Taiwanese belly dancers and querying what image of the 'Middle East' is taught in conjunction with belly dancing in Taiwan since there are few teachers with Middle Eastern background.

In "Participant Motivation and Cultural Identity in Belly Dancing: A case study of a Community in Shitwen District of Taichung City" Ge (2009) concludes that the motivation of belly dance practitioners including body-beauty, exercise, temporarily leaving busy social roles, improving confidence, and expanding social networks. Besides, Ge asserts the popularity of belly dance in Taiwan indicates that Middle Eastern culture is accepted and identified by more Taiwanese people. According to her study, many people of older generation are still conservative, and are less likely to accept belly dance.

Though various methods were adopted, and diverse viewpoints were held, all of the above studies confirm that belly dance has become one of the most popular leisure dances among Taiwanese women, with participants consisting of women in different age groups. Related associations, at either the national or regional level, have been founded, while workshops and competitions are held regularly every year. Taiwanese people learn belly dancing in classes provided in community universities and dance studios. According to these studies, weight-loss, body-shaping, exercise and exotic image are the main motivations for most participants.

However, these studies of Taiwanese belly dance generally regard "the development of belly dance in Taiwan" as a popular phenomenon, and their focus is primarily laid on exploring the reasons why belly dance has become popular, or they are preliminary discussions about the features of Taiwanese belly dance, based mainly

on their respective observation in teaching or learning.

So far, no study has explored the developments of Taiwanese belly dance in a more macroscopic way. Besides, influences of social background and cultural tradition of Taiwan were not considered much in the analysis of the aforementioned studies. Although Ge (2009) briefly mentioned some conservative people, mainly from the older generation, who perceive belly dance in a negative way because of the female sexiness displayed in the dance, the relationship between belly dancing and women's gender role ideals in Taiwan is not well discussed.

1-3 Research purposes and methods

1-3-1 Purpose

The evolution of belly dance in East Asia is pretty short comparing to its history in the United States and in the Middle East. However, responding to the rapid development of belly dance in Asia in the past decades, the Asia Belly Dance Federation, which consists of members from 13 countries, was established in 2007.⁶⁷ Studies reviewed in the last section assert that belly dance has become an emerging leisure dance in Taiwan. However, none of the studies have explored the developing history of belly dance in Taiwan. The first purpose of this study is to explore the developing process and localizing features of Taiwanese belly dance. By analyzing the promotion strategies of pioneering advocators, news reports, and collecting firsthand data from fieldwork and interviews, I hope to provide a deeper interpretation of local belly dance representations.

The second purpose of this study is to locate the popularity of belly dance in the historical context of Taiwanese society, and to identify the connections between belly dance, women's gender practice, and the idea of womanhood in present Taiwanese

⁶⁷ Asia Belly Dance Federation <http://www.asiabellydance.org/main.html>, accessed July 10th, 2013

society. Confucianism has traditionally had a considerable influence on many aspects of the lives of Taiwanese people. Many studies mentioned that the perception of women according to Confucian values has been influencing women's participation in physical exercise to date. Contrary to traditional gender expectations, the display of the body and femininity is encouraged in belly dancing. Previous studies showed that married or older Taiwanese women are still more constrained by traditional gender expectations; interestingly, they have become the majority belly dance participants in Taiwan. After reviewing previous studies, I found that the perception of belly dance in other cultures is not always positive. Since some traditional gender expectations remain influential in Taiwan, I wonder if Taiwanese women have encountered obstacles to belly dancing, and if so, how they deal with it. Tsai (2009) and Chang (2009) discussed the discourse of body aesthetics of belly dance perceived in Taiwan; however, their arguments are mainly based on personal observation and textual analysis. This study includes traditional culture, media discourse, government policy and social background into analysis, aiming to capture a more holistic landscape of Taiwanese belly dance.

Taking belly dance as its central subject, this dissertation can contribute to the study of cultural interaction between global and local spheres. Moreover, this study shows how women negotiate various gender role expectations as well as their practice in body-beauty and health consumption in a society that went through rapid social change and a process of compressed modernity. The results may enrich the scholarship of anthropology, sociology of leisure and sport, and gender studies in Asia. Moreover, it can fill a gap in the literature because most of the former studies concerning belly dance have focused on the United States and the Middle East.

1-3-2 Methods

This study adopts fieldwork, in-depth interview and textual analysis as research methods.

Fieldwork

Fieldwork undertook during January 2011 and August 2012 in ten institutions (Table 1-2) providing belly dance classes in Taiwan.

Table1-2 List of fieldwork institutions

	Time period	Class
1	Jan 2011-Feb 2011	Crystal belly dance Studio
2	March 2011-May 2011	Crystal belly dance Studio Bade City Music Association Lu-jiang Elementary School
3	March 2012	Wanhua community university
4	Aug 2012	Lucy Lohas Belly Dance Club Butterfly Dance School CYC Activity Center-Changhua Kaohsiung First Community university Aiduola Dance Studio Zi-yin Dance Studio

Interview

For interviewee recruitment, firstly I identified belly dance instructors on the internet through the website of *The Taiwan Dance & Sport Federation*,⁶⁸ and the search engine *Yahoo Taiwan*.⁶⁹ Secondly, I emailed the “*Request for Interview*”⁷⁰ to them, to see if they are interested to join this research. At the same time, I asked the

⁶⁸ TDSF <http://www.bellydance.org.tw/>

⁶⁹ <http://tw.yahoo.com/>

⁷⁰ Appendix 1-2 *Request for Interview*

instructors if there are any students of them who would like to join then I emailed the “*Request for Interview*” to them as well.

Twenty-one Taiwanese women aged from 30 to 70 years old were recruited in the end, all of them having more than three years of experience in belly dancing; eight of them have teaching experience.⁷¹ All the interviews were done in August 2012. I explained to each interviewee the purpose and procedure of the study and received their consent before commencing the interviews.⁷² Interviews were based on the *Interview guide*;⁷³ each of them took approximately 40-60 minutes and was conducted at the subjects’ place of dancing (i.e., dance studio, community center, gymnasium, school) or another location of their convenience. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed in text. Table 1-3 shows some demographic information of the interviewees.

Table 1-3 Demographic information of interviewee

Age distribution	30-39	7
	40-49	8
	50-59	5
	60-	1
Marriage status	Single	5
	Married	16
Occupation	Office lady	12
	Dance instructor	5
	Housewife	3
	Retiree	1

Textual analysis

The texts examined in this study mainly consist of brochures and posters published by

⁷¹ Appendix 1-3 *List of interviewees*

⁷² Appendix 1-4 *Informed consent*; Appendix 1-5 *Consent form*

⁷³ Appendix 1-6 *Interview guide*

belly dance associations and studios, syllabi of belly dance courses in community universities, newspaper articles and electronic news articles published from January 2002 to December 2012. Newspaper articles are cited from “UDNDATA.COM”, one of the most inclusive newspaper databases in Taiwan. Electronic news articles are searched from the website of six Taiwanese online newspapers including *The Liberty Times*, *LT Sports*, *CNA News*, *Now News*, *Taiwan Review*, and *Yahoo News Taiwan*. The reason for including internet news as the main material for this study resides in the fact that belly dancing information appears frequently in this medium. In Taiwan, over 63% of the entire population use the internet (TWNIC, 2010), and ‘reading internet news’ is included among the most common behaviors when people surf the internet (Lin 2007:2-3).

Chapter 2 The development of belly dance in Taiwan

Middle Eastern immigrants and their culture are rarely seen in Taiwanese people's daily lives. Belly dance was almost unknown to Taiwanese people before 2002. Nevertheless, this exotic dance has been enthusiastically embraced by many Taiwanese women in just about a decade of development. Up to date, no belly dance instructor based in Taiwan is originally from the Middle East or from the United States; Taiwanese women learn belly dance from Taiwanese instructors for most of the cases.

Prior to 2007, dance instructors Wan-Ru Lee and Eva Shen played influential roles in the initial stage of belly dance development in Taiwan. In their respective dance schools and dance troupes, they trained numerous assistant instructors to teach the dance all around Taiwan. Since the number of belly dance learners and instructors increased rapidly, some former assistant instructors of the two major schools started to build their own belly dance businesses.

In 2005, Taiwan Dance & Sport Federation (TDSF) and Wan-Ru Lee co-organized the first belly dance competitions in Taiwan, the Taiwan Open Belly Dance Competition. Since then, TDSF has been regularly hosting or co-hosting domestic and international belly dance competitions, which have largely expanded the interaction between the belly dance community in Taiwan and those in other countries. The first certificate system of belly dance instructors was launched in Taiwan in 2006. Around the same period of time, inviting foreign belly dance masters to teach short-term workshops in Taiwan become a new trend.⁷⁴

Looking back the developing history of belly dance in Taiwan, I notice a

⁷⁴ Resources from Chen (2007) and my interview with Lucy in August 2012

remarkable variation of the landscape from “two power monopoly”⁷⁵ to “a hundred flowers bloom”⁷⁶ which was happened around 2007. People who are interested in acquiring advanced skills or becoming an instructor don’t need to be under the authority of a specific dance school or studio anymore since there are more approaches to master belly dance thereafter. I divide the development of belly dance in Taiwan into two phases: the initial stage (before the certificate system launched by TDSF in 2007) and the developmental stage.⁷⁷ In the first half of this chapter, I give an introduction of the two phases of Taiwanese belly dance. In the second part, I give more pictures of the present landscape of Taiwanese belly dance by showing the ethnographic data I collected in dance classes.

Table 2-1 The two phases of Taiwanese belly dance

Developing phase	Promoter	Features
The initial stage 2002-2007	Wan-Ru Lee’s Dance studio and troupe	“Two power monopoly”: Wan-Ru Lee and Eva Shen
	Eva Shen’s Dance studio and troupe	
	Taiwan Dance and Sport Association (TDSA)	
In 2007, TDSA changed its official to Taiwan Dance and Sport Federation (TDSF), and launched its belly dance certificate system		
The developmental stage 2007-	Community university	“A hundred flowers bloom”: more instructors, certificate training courses, foreign master workshops, social media (Facebook, Youtube), competitions, festivals
	Dance studio	
	Fitness club, community center	
	Taiwan Dance and Sport Federation (TDSF)	

⁷⁵ Wan-Ru Lee and Eva Shen

⁷⁶ A variety of belly dance instructors, classes, workshops, competitions, information and etc.

⁷⁷ After TDSF launched the certificate system

2-1 The two phases of Taiwanese belly dance

The first person to actively promote and teach belly dance in Taiwan is Wan-Ru Lee, a Taiwanese woman who had learned the dance when studying in the Middle East.

Wan-Ru Lee (李宛儒)

Wan-Ru Lee was not trained to be a dancer. She was major in international affairs as an undergraduate, and she got her master of Middle Eastern politics and culture from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in Israel, where she encountered belly dancing, and later became a member of Jerusalem Arabesque Belly Dance Troupe. After completing her master course, she came back home in July 2002 and made her first belly dance performance in Taiwan in September 2002. Six months later, she founded the first Middle Eastern belly dance troupe in Taiwan—*Arabesque Bellydance*. In the fact that belly dance was scarcely known to Taiwanese people at the time, Lee tried to arouse people's interest in the dance by performing, teaching and giving lectures around Taiwan.⁷⁸

Lee developed separate training programs (系統化教學) for belly dance performers and instructors at her studio because she is aware of the different requirements for performing and teaching. She thought characteristics like cooperation (合群) and being able to display skill and charisma on stage are important for a good performer, while vitality, friendliness and the ability to explain dance movements are crucial for being a good instructor. She assigned respective mission to each group: troupe members are in charge of performance, and instructors are responsible for teaching.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Data collected from the official website of Wan-Ru Lee's Dance troupe *Arabesque Bellydance*, <http://www3.nccu.edu.tw/~yghou/bellyweb/introduce/introduce01.htm>, accessed August 8th, 2013

⁷⁹ Data collected from the official website of Wan-Ru Lee's Dance troupe *Arabesque Bellydance*,

Lee taught her first belly dance class in Taiwan in January 2003, and then started to teach belly dance in community universities in Taipei since April 2003.⁸⁰ Presently, many students of hers have become belly dance lecturers in different community universities. To look back from ten years later, the initial cooperation between belly dance teachers and the community universities is very important for the dance to popularize in Taiwan. Through the schools of community university system, belly dance has become accessible to people in most of the cities in Taiwan by very affordable prices. Moreover, it also indirectly contributed the participants' composition that mature women become a big group of adherents.⁸¹

Another important influence of Wan-Ru Lee on the developments of Taiwanese belly dance is that she emphasized “body-beauty” as the major benefits of belly dancing. In both of her instructing book and VCD—*Slim Body Belly Dance*, she demonstrates how to solve body or weight problems by practicing belly dance movements (Lee 2004). Lee also stated in one newspaper interview: ‘I didn’t have a waist curve when I took up other dances before, but my waist curve appeared when I started learning belly dance. Most Taiwanese are not really fat, they just lack exercise. For sedentary office workers, belly dance can especially exercise waist and abdominal areas, as a substitute for exhausting whole-body exercise and it is able to shape specific body parts.’ The reporter concluded in her own voice: ‘The greatest appeal of belly dance is the multiple benefits of reducing fat on the waist and stomach, toning the hip and waist area, creating a curve, and improving firmness of muscle.’⁸² Since belly dance was introduced to Taiwanese people as a “body-sliming” and “body-sculpturing” dance from the beginning, it has been

<http://www3.nccu.edu.tw/~yghou/bellyweb/introduce/introduce01.htm>, accessed August 8th, 2013

⁸⁰ Lee taught at Taipei Neihsu community university, Hsinayi community university and Zhongzheng community university

⁸¹ I will discuss more about this in next chapter

⁸² This quote is cited from Tsai (2009:4)

primarily marketed as an “exercise dance” rather than a folkdance or performing arts.

Eva Shen (沈宜璇)

Eva Shen is another pioneering belly dance promoter in Taiwan. She started learning dance in the age of four and was then trained as a professional dancer in school. She firstly learned belly dance in Taiwan in 2002 and started to teach belly dance in community universities.⁸³ Later after, she founded her dance studio and troupe—*Katicy Middle Eastern Dance Troup* (卡蒂西中東肚皮舞團) which was one of the leading troupes in the early history of Taiwanese belly dance. Shen frequently went to the Middle East for mastering more authentic skills and knowledge of belly dance (Shen 2009).⁸⁴

In 2006, Shen founded Taiwan Belly Dance Association (TBDA) and served as the first chairman (Figure 2-2).⁸⁵ In cooperation with Mahmoud Reda,⁸⁶ a famous Egyptian dancer and choreographer, she introduced the first belly dance certificate system—MCPB (Mahmoud Reda Certified Professional Bellydancer) to Taiwan in the same year (Figure 2-2).⁸⁷ Several former students of Shen are now famous belly dance teachers in Taiwan running their own studios and troupes. A couple of years ago, Shen gradually moved her belly dance business focus to China, and founded a studio in Nanjing which teaches not only belly dance but also

⁸³ Shen taught in Taipei Beitou Community university, Shilin Community university, Wanhua Community university and Daan Community university



⁸⁴ Shen used to live in Egypt for three years

⁸⁵ The association changed its name to Women and Children Information Association in 2010, data collected from the official website of Women and Children Information Association <http://1001.org.tw/index.php>, accessed on August 10th, 2013

⁸⁶ Mahmoud Reda is the co-founder of the worldly well-know Egyptian folkdance troupe—Reda Troupe

⁸⁷ The certificate has not been issued regularly since Eva Shen moved her business focus to China in around 2010

Hawaiian Hula dance, yoga-pilates, and also trains models.⁸⁸ Moreover, she has published two books and some DVDs instructing belly dance techniques as well as sharing her Middle Eastern experiences (Shen 2006, 2009).

	
<p>Figure2-1 The trademark of Taiwan Belly Dance Association (Figure credit: TBDA official website)</p>	<p>Figure2-2 Mahmoud Reda Certified Professional Bellydancer (Figure credit: TBDA official website)</p>

Taiwan Dance & Sport Association (TDSA)

Taiwan Dance & Sport Association, founded in September 2005, is the first non-profit organization devoted to the promotion of belly dance in Taiwan.⁸⁹ It was renamed as Taiwan Dance & Sport Federation (TDSF) in January 2007 (Figure 2-3).⁹⁰



According to its founding prospects, the federation aims at promoting cultural exchange through dance, enhancing the fitness of Taiwanese citizens, and cultivating talented dancers who can win international competitions, which are inspired by the major sport and diplomatic policies of Taiwanese government—“Sports for all (全民

⁸⁸ Eva Shen’s official website <http://evabellydance.com/>, accessed August 10th, 2013

⁸⁹ The federation promotes Indian dance and Hawaiian Hula dance as well, but the main focus is on belly dance

⁹⁰ Data collected from TDSF official website—About TDSF <http://www.tdsf.org.tw/>, accessed August 10th, 2013

運動)” and “Cultural diplomacy (文化外交).”⁹¹ The federation promotes belly dance mainly by three ways: hosting domestic competitions; selecting and supporting dancers for the Taiwanese delegation to join international competitions; and holding training programs and issuing certificates.

	
<p>Figure 2-3 TDSF mark (Photo credit: TDSF)</p>	<p>Figure 2-4 Wan-Ru Lee speaking at the First Taiwan Belly Dance Open Competition (Photo credit: Arabesque Bellydance)</p>

In 2005, the federation co-hosted the “Taiwan Belly Dance Open Competition (台灣肚皮舞公開賽)” with Wan-Ru Lee, (Figure 2-4), which has been held annually since then (Figures 2-5 to 2-8), and has become the most longevous competition in the history of Taiwanese belly dance. Another national-wide competition held by the federation is “National Community University Belly Dance Championship (全國社區大學肚皮舞錦標賽)” which commenced in 2007 and has made its seventh year in May 2013 (Figure 2-9, 2-10). Starting from 2007, the federation has been holding at least 3 national-wide belly dance events in each year (Appendix 2-1). In response to

⁹¹ Data collected from TDSF official website—About TDSF <http://www.tdsf.org.tw/>, accessed August 10th, 2013

the increasing number of participants from various age groups, the categories of competitors have expanded from three divisions⁹² to more than ten divisions.⁹³

	
<p>Figure 2-5 Poster of 2006 Taiwan Belly Dance Open Competition</p> <p>Figure credit: TDSF</p>	<p>Figure 2-6 Poster of 2009 Taiwan Belly Dance Open Competition</p> <p>Figure credit: TDSF</p>
	
<p>Figure 2-7 Poster of 2010 Taiwan Belly Dance Open Competition</p> <p>Figure credit: TDSF</p>	<p>Figure 2-8 Judges of 2011 Taiwan Belly Dance Open Competition</p> <p>Figure credit: TDSF</p>

TDSF is also in charge of selecting talented dancers as Taiwanese representatives to compete in regional and international belly dance competitions.⁹⁴ They see participating international competitions a good chance to facilitate cultural exchange

⁹² Professional; amateur solo; amateur group (TDSF competition rule 2005)

⁹³ Professional solo/group; fusion; amateur solo/group; golden age solo/group (over 45 years old); kids solo (3-7 years old); elementary solo (7-12 years old); teenager (12-15 years old); kids; teenager group (TDSF competition rule 2013)

⁹⁴ See Appendix 2-1, Table 3-4, Table 3-5

and civic diplomacy.⁹⁵ Take the year 2013 for example, the federation supported Taiwanese delegation joining four international competitions held in Taiwan, Vietnam, Seoul and Macau (Figure 2-11, 2-12).⁹⁶ Taiwanese dancers have brought many big prizes home in the past few years (Figure 2-13 to 2-15).

The federation is also devoted to the cultivation of belly dance instructors and judges. Cooperating with *Hayat Institution of Dance Education* in Turkey, the federation established its training system in 2005, and started to hold training courses every year as well as to issue certificates since 2007. Up to 2011, they have certified 243 grade-C belly dance instructors, 41 grade-B instructors and 20 grade-C belly dance referees (Table 2-2).

The chairman of TDSF, Niu-Lang Tsen, was trained in the traditional/alternative medicine field,⁹⁷ which makes her particularly interested in the medical benefits of belly dancing.⁹⁸ She asserts that belly dancing is very good for women's health since it was related to the worship of fertility goddess in the ancient time;⁹⁹ the federation has been promoting "belly dance for the pregnant (孕婦肚皮舞)" since 2006. Dr. Jie Chung, the former director of the Center for Traditional Medicine of Taipei Veterans General Hospital, was invited to serve as the medical consultant of TDSF.¹⁰⁰ His articles, "Pregnant Women Belly Dance" and "Medical Belly Dance" have been widely read and quoted by belly dance instructors in Taiwan.¹⁰¹

⁹⁵ About TDSF <http://www.tdsf.org.tw/>, accessed August 10th, 2013

⁹⁶ Including Global Oriental Dance Artist Competition in Taiwan (June), Asian-Pacific Open Oriental Competition in Vietnam (July), World Belly Dance Competition in Seoul (October), and Far East International Belly Dance Competition in Macau (December)

⁹⁷ Tseng is also the president of The Traditional Medicine Naturopathy of R.O.C. (中華民國自然療法學會)

⁹⁸ An informal interview with Tsen in August 2011

⁹⁹ Tsen's article "Traditional Egyptian medicine and the dance of reproduction: Oriental Dance" is included in the textbook of TDSF certificate training program

¹⁰⁰ Dr. Chung passed away in Taipei in November 2012

¹⁰¹ These articles are uploaded on the official website of TDSF

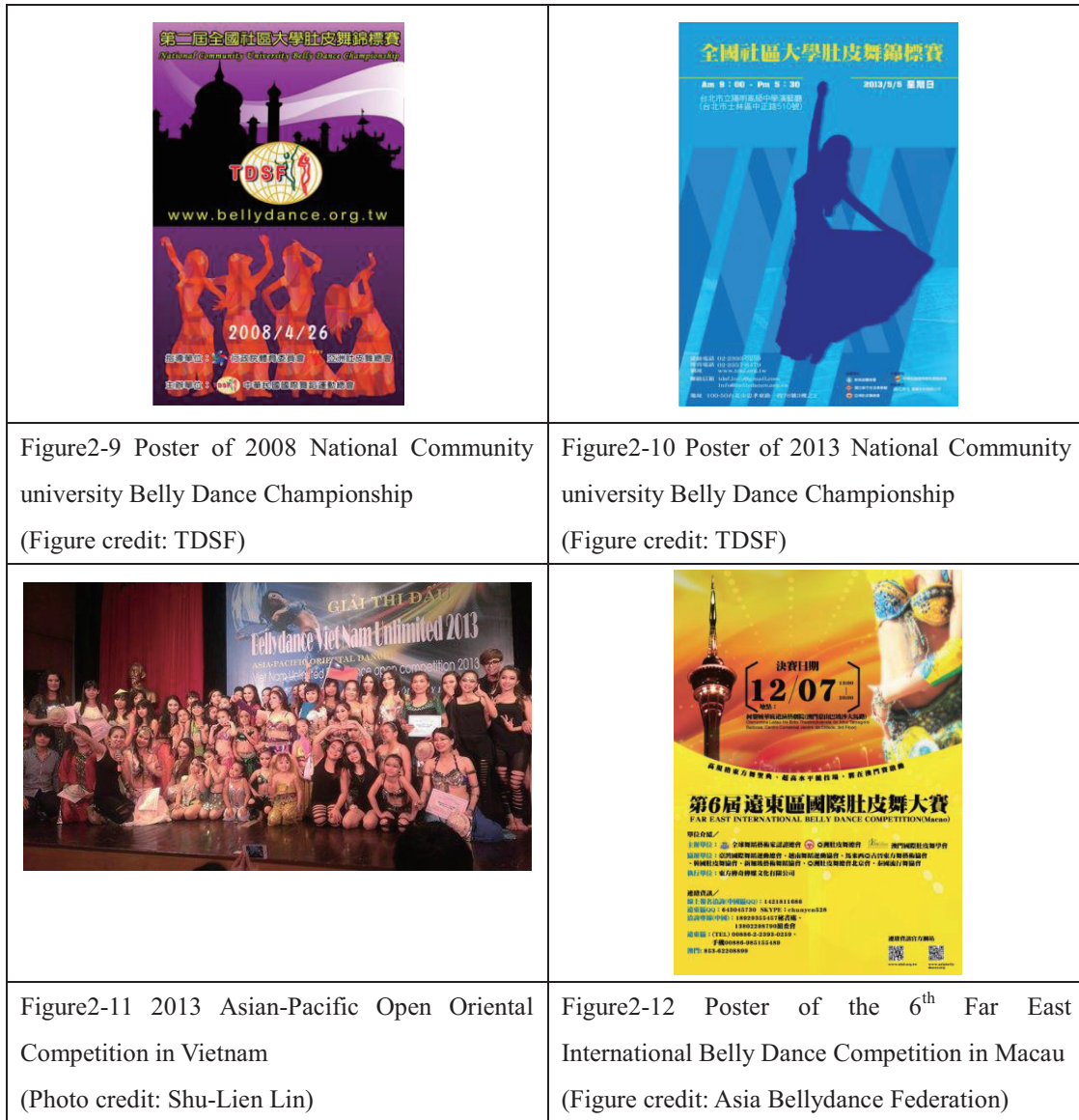


Figure2-9 Poster of 2008 National Community university Belly Dance Championship (Figure credit: TDSF)

Figure2-10 Poster of 2013 National Community university Belly Dance Championship (Figure credit: TDSF)

Figure2-11 2013 Asian-Pacific Open Oriental Competition in Vietnam (Photo credit: Shu-Lien Lin)

Figure2-12 Poster of the 6th Far East International Belly Dance Competition in Macau (Figure credit: Asia Bellydance Federation)

Table2-2 Certificates issued by TDSF from 2008 to 2011

	Instructor-grade C	Instructor-grade B	Referee-grade C
2008	12	6	
2009	91	22	9
2010	98		
2011	42	13	11
	243	41	20

(Collected by this study, source from TDSF official website)

	<p>Figure 2-13 Nancy Kuo, championship of 2008 Ahlan Wa Sahlan Belly Dance Festival in Egypt (Photo credit: Nancy Kuo)</p>
	<p>Figure 2-14 Yu-Ting Sun, champion of 2010 World Belly Dance Competition in Seoul (Photo credit: Yu-Ting Sun)</p>
	<p>Figure 2-15 Iveta Chen & Jennifer Chen, first place of oriental ensemble category, 2010 Tokyo International Bellydance Competition (Photo credit: Iveta Chen)</p>

2-2 Belly dance in local communities

In addition to teaching belly dance in their own studios, both Wan-Ru Lee and Eva Shen used to teach in community universities. Some students of them have also become belly dance instructors in different Community universities while others have founded their own studios or troupes.¹⁰² The popularity of belly dance in a short time created a keen need for belly dance courses in the leisure dance market, as a response, teachers who were originally trained in various dance genres started to learn and teach belly dance.

According to previous studies, community universities and dance studios are the major places providing belly dance classes in Taiwan (Chen 2007; Ge 2009). Data collected in this research show there are 82 community universities providing belly dance classes in the school year of 2013.¹⁰³ In what follows, I am going to show the landscape of belly dance in Taiwan based on fieldwork in belly dance classes, interviews and the analysis on related publications.

2-2-1 Community university

The first community university in Taiwan—Wenshan Community university—was founded in 1998, since then, community universities have been established in different part of Taiwan one after another. The emergence of community universities was inspired by the educational and social reform activities from the public. Professor Wu-Shuon Huang, the key advocator of community university, explains that the first founding purpose of community university is “knowledge liberating” (知識解放); the other is for citizenship cultivation and the creation of a civil society. Huang expects

¹⁰² Take interviewees of this study for example, Fifi and Sofie were students of Eva Shen; Aisha was student of Wan-Ru Lee’s student

¹⁰³ There are 99 community universities in 2013

that by way of these schools, various kind of knowledge can be easily accessible to local residents.¹⁰⁴ Up to date, “community university” has become a prevailing adult education system which has around 100 schools all over the island providing a wide range of courses at reasonable prices (Figure 2-16).¹⁰⁵ Each community university has its own way of course classification; belly dance and other leisure dances are usually belong to the category of “health fitness¹⁰⁶”, “physical movement¹⁰⁷” or “living arts.”¹⁰⁸

The school year of a community university is divided to three semesters: Spring (18 weeks, Feb to Jun), Fall (18 weeks, Sep to Jan) and Summer (6 weeks, Jul to Aug). It adopts credit system for the tuition, the cost is generally \$1000 NTD per credit;¹⁰⁹ belly dance class mostly counts two or three credits while the duration of a class is 1.5 to 2.5 hours per week, 10% to 20% discounts are applicable to early bird registration. Each community university has its website showing the list of courses, the syllabus of each class, and the biography and teaching philosophy of instructors (Figure 2-17, 2-18) where students can easily make registration online. The course fee is paid to the school rather than straight to the instructors. The average number of students per class is 30.

¹⁰⁴ Cited from the official website of National Association for the Promotion of Community universities 社團法人社區大學全國促進會(NAPCU)

<http://www.napcu.org.tw/2012/index.html>. NAPCU was founded in 1999

¹⁰⁵ Typical courses provided including cooking, foreign languages, art, music, physical activities and etc. (NAPCU <http://www.napcu.org.tw/website/>)

¹⁰⁶ “衛保體能類”(Wanhua Community university)

¹⁰⁷ “肢體律動類”(Daan Community university)

¹⁰⁸ “生活藝能類”(Kaohsiung First Community university)

¹⁰⁹ Around \$32USD

星期一	星期二	星期三	星期四	星期五	星期六
G101A 少林八段錦及達摩易筋經養生氣功 莊豐源 課程額滿	G102A 易經養生保健 周福寶 熱烈招生中	G104A 塑身輕體皮拉提斯 張夢孜 即將額滿	G107A 中醫藥膳養生班 程世顯 課程額滿	G109A 塑身輕體皮拉提斯(萬華國中校區) 張夢孜 尚有餘額	G110A 瑜伽生活美學 林利美 課程額滿
G301A 健康塑身爵士舞 陳凱怡 即將額滿	G103A 乒乓乒乓—桌球趣 蔡浚漢 尚有餘額	G105A 全身經絡自我刮痧保健 周福寶 即將額滿	G108A 菩提園養生氣功-六字訣、八段錦、五禽戲、易筋經 陳錫敏 熱烈招生中	G202A 萬華社大樂活肚皮舞社 陳淑玲 課程額滿	G111A 陳清平 新架太極拳七十六式(前半套) 廖啟彰 尚有餘額
G302A 中東文化肚皮舞(初級) 林麗美 尚有餘額	G304A 健康塑身排舞 美國方塊舞 林玉華 尚有餘額	G106A 高齡化社會與福利資源 章珍貞 熱烈招生中	G201A Clogging (美式民族休閒踏踏舞) 洪熾熾 熱烈招生中	G315A MV流行熱舞 許熙彤(Jessie) 熱烈招生中	G317A 標準舞TOP(下午12:00-2:30) 柯秋蓮 尚有餘額

Figure2-16 The class schedule of Taipei Wanhua Community university (fall 2013)

快樂學習·光明人生

 **臺中市五權社區大學**
Taichung Wu Chyuan Community College

認識社大 招生園地 課程資訊 社大活動 檔案下載 回首頁

當前位置: 網站首頁 - 招生資訊 - 臺中市五權社區大學102年度第2期★一日體驗課程即將登場★部分課程已額滿★8/26開學日_ 搜尋關鍵字「肚皮」

有11073位讀者讀過此文

課程名稱	臺中市五權社區大學102年度第2期★一日體驗課程即將登場★部分課程已額滿★8/26開學日		
師資介紹	各類課程安排優秀師資為您帶來終身學習之樂趣★提醒您~報名未繳費者,恕不保留名額。傳真報名後請來電確認,並儘速繳費。★報名順序以完成繳費為優先,已額滿課程恕無法開放第1、2週試聽,敬請見諒★×102年7月31日以前未完成報名及繳費,新舊生可享9折優惠(新生需繳交報名費150元整)★網頁顯示之課程費用為已享9折課程,優惠課程及優惠身份者,恕無法再享有9折優惠。8月1日起即恢復回復。	學分數	
學費		政府補助額	
開課日期	2013/8/26	停課日期	2013/12/28
上課時間	102/8/26起陸續開課週一至週五上午10:00-12:00 下午14:00-17:00 晚上18:30-21:30~依各課程上課時間為準,每1期總週數為18週,其中第1-8週及10-17週共16週為課程教學週。第9週公共論壇聯誼活動及第18週成果展活動週,該兩週課程停課,9/19、9/20、10/10國定假日放假		

課程搜索
關鍵字

Figure2-17 The home page of Taichung Wu Chyuan Community College



Figure2-18 The home page of Kaohsiung First Community university

Take the course provided at Daan community university for example (Figure 2-19, 2-20). There are four belly dance classes offered in the fall semester 2013: “Middle Eastern belly dance basic,” “Curvaceous belly dance fusion,” “Fusion belly dance intermediate,” and “Mysterious elegant tribal style belly dance.” Corresponding to the findings of previous studies (Lee 2007; Ge 2009), fusion style is common among the belly dance classes taught in Daan. Examining the introduction and objectives of these classes (Appendix 2-2), words like exercise, body slimming, curvaceous, pretty, confidence, feminine charm, and exoticism are prevalently associated with the dance. Some instructors particularly encourage students to do volunteer performances in local communities. The following shows some excerpts from the class introductions:

“Leading students into the beautiful world of belly dancing; conquering everybody’s heart by the graceful dance. A dance to **display confidence, beauty and the self**. Expressing belly dance in a novel way, fusing the dance with ballet, Chinese folk dance, tango or new jazz, let every student to experience the diverse

styles of belly dancing.” (Tin-Fei Yang, Daan community university)

“This course introduces the gracefulness and steadiness of Tribal style belly dance. By training specific muscle groups to improve belly dancing skills and prettify the **body shape**. Students can feel free to take part in volunteer performances which is very helpful to accumulate experiences on the stage as well as the improving the interaction with local communities.” (Jia-Jin Lu, Daan community university)

“By introducing the diverse **mysteries** and physical movements of Middle Eastern belly dance and Indian Bollywood dance, this course leads everyone to experience the **exoticism** and charm of the dances, which is the most popular and the best way to experience Middle Eastern and Indian culture. You can improve your **fitness** and **feminine curves** through practicing this low-impact and high exercise-effect dance, good for all ages. Through professional leading to develop your **bodily and emotional expressions**, relieve stress, become **optimistic and confident**. Enhancing personal **beauty** and attractiveness, initiate your first step to become a **perfect woman**.” (Mong-Ping Sun, Daan community university)

“By incorporating movements of Indian dance, jazz dance and ballet into belly dance choreographies, this course students the fusion of belly dance culture and other dances. Displaying **women’s emotion and sentimentality** through bodily movements to improve **self-esteem** and **body beauty**.” (Anna Liao, Daan community university)

“This course aims at helping students to get the **effects of exercise** through dancing practices while passing on the correctly characteristics of Middle Eastern culture and spread the culture of Oriental dance at the same time. Incorporating elements of other popular dances with belly dance, sisters [students] can freely display their **mesmerizing feminine charms** and show off their **attractive bodies**. You will fall in love with yourself again!” (Hwan-Chuen Liao, Taichung Wu Chyuan community university)¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ Appendix 2-3



Figure 2-19 Figure The home page of Daan Community university

肢體律動類課程					
●表示學分免費課程；★表示學分費五折課程；◆為使用電腦教室課程；◆為使用電子琴教室課程；■為使用烹飪教室課程					
TH32	葉榮宗	運動舞蹈(國際標準舞)	三學分, 19:00-21:40, 18週, 金甌	週一	
TH38	陳靜誼	靜誼的國標舞(進階)	三學分, 19:00-21:40, 18週, 金甌	週一	
AH32	Anna Liao	MV舞蹈	三學分, 19:00-21:40, 18週, 金甌	週一	
IK34	劉嘉玉	京艷敦煌	三學分, 19:00-21:40, 18週, 金甌	週一	
TH34	李利新	國際標準舞(進階)	三學分, 19:00-21:40, 18週, 開平	週一	
AH33	郭紫柔	健康塑身肚皮舞初級	三學分, 19:00-21:40, 18週, 東方	週一	
TH37	陳美安	美安國標舞(進階)	三學分, 19:00-21:40, 18週, 金甌	週二	
AH48	Candy 孫夢萍	中東肚皮舞初級&寶來瑪印度舞入門	三學分, 19:00-21:40, 18週, 金甌	週二	
IH43	任超俊	任超俊活力國標舞學苑	三學分, 19:00-21:40, 18週, 金甌	週二	
IH26	祝曼萍	國際標準舞輕鬆學	三學分, 19:00-21:40, 18週, 開平	週二	
IH48	張輝勝	國際標準舞摩登舞	三學分, 19:00-21:40, 18週, 東方	週二	
TH30	Anna Liao	融合風肚皮舞中級	三學分, 19:00-21:40, 18週, 金甌	週三	
IH62	黃星諭	力與美的佛拉明哥舞	三學分, 19:00-21:40, 18週, 金甌	週三	
IH79	JESSIE	MV流行熱舞	三學分, 19:00-21:40, 18週, 金甌	週三	
IH89	李慧 淑、李 莉蓮、 游惠翎	排舞(LineDance)	三學分, 19:00-21:00, 18週, 東方	週三	
IH67	林佩如	國際標準舞拉丁	三學分, 19:00-21:40, 18週, 東方	週三	
IH75	楊婷妃	曲線肚皮融合風	三學分, 19:00-21:40, 18週, 東方	週三	

Figure 2-20 Course list of Daan Community university fall 2013—physical movement category (partial)

Examining the syllabi of belly dance class in Taipei Daan community university,¹¹¹ Taichung Wuchuen community university,¹¹² Wanhua community university,¹¹³ and Kaohsiung First community university,¹¹⁴ I notice that the first week is generally scheduled for the introduction to Middle Eastern culture, history of belly dance or Middle Eastern music; from the second week, the foci of classes switch to practice the basic movements of belly dancing and the choreography. Many instructors also spend one week to teach skills of “Middle Eastern Makeup.” A few courses highlight “Middle Eastern culture” on their class titles and introduce more related things in classes, such as Arabic harem culture, Middle Eastern food and women’s social status in Middle Eastern societies.¹¹⁵ Instructors usually teach (at least) a piece of choreography in one semester so that students can perform the result in the Achievement Shows (成果展), which typically are arranged in the last week of a semester.

Fieldwork at belly dance classes in community universities

Case 1

Institute: Kaohsiung First community university (Figure 2-21)

Time: August 2012

Location: A classroom of Kaohsiung Chien-Chin Junior High School

Instructor: Aisha

Course name: Happy, confident, becoming a charming woman—Middle East beauty Belly dance¹¹⁶

¹¹¹ Appendix 2-2

¹¹² Appendix 2-3

¹¹³ Appendix 2-4

¹¹⁴ Appendix 2-5

¹¹⁵ See Appendix 2-2, Mong-Ping Sun’s class

¹¹⁶ Appendix 2-5



Figure 2-21 Admission brochure of Kaohsiung First Community university, Fall 2013

It was a rainy day in a summer afternoon; several students were late to the class because of the heavy downpour. About 15 students came to the class that day, aged from 35-60 years old; most of them are mothers. Almost all of them put on pretty practice outfits (Figure 2-22), and the class atmosphere was very lively. The first thirty minutes was warming up, and then the instructor, Aisha, started to teach new movements of the choreography for another thirty minutes. After a break, Aisha led the class to dance with music from the beginning to the part that we had just learned. The music was lively, a Lebanese style popular song. At first, many students could not keep up with the music because they didn't remember well the choreography that was taught in previous weeks, but they got it back soon after repeated practices with Aisha's lead in the front for around 45 minutes (Figure 2-23). In the end of practice, Aisha let students take videos of her performing the dance with cell phones or cameras so that they can practice at home (Figure 2-24). The instructor closed the class by 10 to 15 minutes cooling down with some stretches and yoga movements.



Figure 2-22 Aisha's belly dance class at Kaohsiung First Community university

During the class, I exchanged a few words with a young mother standing next to me. She was complaining that she couldn't ride motorcycle due to the heavy rain, so she drove to the school on that day. There was no belly dance class provided near her house so she commutes forty minutes (one way) every week just for taking the class.

After the class, I told Aisha that I was very surprised to see a poster on the school bulletin board announcing a drawing for places in her class in the next semester (Figure 2-25). She smiled and said, "Too many people want to register so we need to decide by drawing lots. Actually, several years ago, my teacher and I almost failed to open our first class here because we were not able to recruit enough students. But as you see, the class is very popular now. Probably it's because there are still not as many belly dance classes in Kaohsiung as there are in Taipei."



Figure 2-23 Practicing the choreography



Figure 2-24 Students shooting Aisha's demonstration of the choreography

I also noticed that the class hour is longer in the community universities than in dance studios. Aside from teaching classes in the community university, Aisha also

teaches in dance studio and works as a director of one belly dance troupe. I asked her to compare the class in respective system. She replied, “The class time in Community university is usually longer (2 to 3 hours) so the tempo of class can’t be too intense. Generally speaking, community university students are composed of middle-aged retirees or housewives so you have to be aware of their physical condition. Moreover, their intention to the class is usually for exercise or relaxation, so I don’t stress too much on their skills. As for teaching in dance studios, it depends on the age of students. Young students tend to be more interested in challenging and performable pieces, however, if that’s a ‘mom class’, then I’ll just teach in the similar way as I do in community universities.”

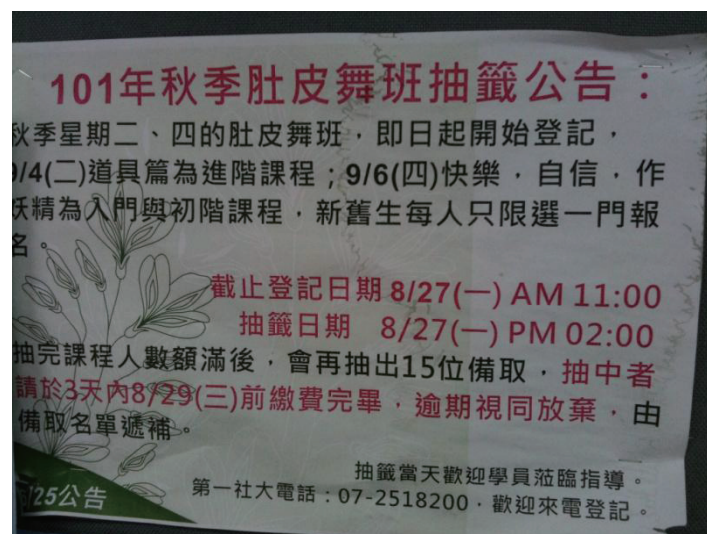


Figure 2-25 Announcement of the drawing of lots for places in Aisha’s belly dance class in the fall semester of 2013

Case 2

Institute: Wanhua community university

Time: evening, August 2011 & August 2012

Location: Taipei Long Shan Junior High School classroom & Lucy's apartment

Instructor: Lucy

Course name: Middle Eastern belly dance basic¹¹⁷

Lucy's class is for women only, three hours long on every Tuesday night which includes warming up, demonstration of movements, choreography practice, cooling down, discussion and sharing. During our chat, Lucy told me why she never accepts invitations of teaching classes which are less than two hours. She described those one-hour classes provides in some fitness clubs as "high risk" since they usually don't have enough time for warming-up and cooling-down. Being minded that the average age of her students is high, she always spends longer time on warming-up and cooling-down to prevent them from injuries.

My first fieldwork in her class was the last class of spring semester in 2011, which was scheduled as a *hafla*.¹¹⁸ In the first half of the class, Lucy led the class to rehearse the choreography and let them practice as small groups. All of them performed the same choreography whereas each group had a different design on their own costumes, hairstyle, formation change and so on. Lucy let me practice with one of the groups and I performed together with them in the end (Figure 2-26 to 2-30). The second half of the class was potluck, everyone was sharing food and having fun (Figure 2-31). Students of that class were aged from 35 to 60 years old. Besides me,

¹¹⁷ Appendix 2-4

¹¹⁸ Hafla. (Pronounced "Hahf lah".) This basically refers to a party. A private hafla thrown by a belly dancer usually involves Middle Eastern music (sometimes live musicians jamming, sometimes just taped music), dancers taking turns performing for each other, and some open-floor dancing for everyone to get up and enjoy the music. A more public hafla may be effectively a full belly dance festival, with vendors selling their wares and a more formalized stage show (A Glossary of Belly Dance Terms by Shira <http://www.shira.net/glossary.htm>), accessed July 10th, 2013

there was another college girl in that class who is actually a daughter of another student. She told me that she just came here for exercise with her mom. Most students of that class had been attending for more than one year; some of them had had experience of belly dancing for more than three years.



Figure 2-26 Introducing myself to the class



Figure 2-27 Summer 2011 Hafla at Lucy's class



Figure 2-28 Summer 2011 Hafla at Lucy's class



Figure 2-29 Summer 2011 Hafla at Lucy's class



Figure 2-30 Me with my teammates



Figure 2-31 Potluck time

During the class, Lucy also led a small game about spiritual growth, encouraging students to share their feelings with others. This is not commonly included in a belly dance class so I asked her for the reason to incorporate the activity to her class. She said, she used to spend more time talking about spiritual growth and Middle Eastern culture but students did not like it. Because students came to the class primarily for exercise, they wanted to feel that they “get enough exercise,” so she kept trying to balance the time spent on dancing and conveying ideas. One student of Lucy told me in the interview that some students quit the class because they didn’t like the teacher talking too much in class.¹¹⁹

In the summer of 2012, I got a chance to observe an extracurricular practice for an up-coming volunteer performance (Figure 2-32, 2-33). There was a very bad typhoon that evening, and three students--Jade, Apricot and Pearl--came to Lucy’s place together by taxi after work. Jade, Apricot and Pearl used to be colleagues in the same company. They joined Lucy’s class together three years ago; their motivation was purely for exercise in the beginning. Jade told me that she had never expected herself to be able to perform since she was very shy. I noticed their interaction with the instructor was like friends, they naturally shared their work and family with each other.

When we were chatting during the practice break, Lucy shared her opinion about why it is difficult for belly dance troupes to survive in Taiwan, “When teachers tried to get profit from students’ costume purchasing and the rewards of commercial performances, some students might feel being taken advantages. That’s why I prefer to teach in community universities because I don’t need to recruit students or to deal with money myself.”

¹¹⁹ Data collected from the interview with Chloe



Figure 2-32 Lucy and students practicing at Lucy's living room



Figure 2-33 Lucy and students practicing at Lucy's living room

During the practice, Apricot got a message from her boss, who asked her to work the next day. Everybody was very angry for that since the next day has been officially announced as a “typhoon holiday;” her boss let another young female staff stay home but asked Apricot to work. Lucy commented, “It’s really difficult to be a middle-aged professional woman, people expect you to take good care of both your family and work. Especially in the work place, people tend to treat young girls much nicer.” Then, they started to encourage Apricot to keep her spirits up and don’t let her boss and this unfairness ruin her good mood. When Apricot was walking down the stairs, Lucy suggested, “Don’t think too much, grab a taxi to the office tomorrow and charge it to your expense account!” I feel these mature students and the instructor have developed a friendship for mutual support which is beyond dancing itself.

2-2-2 Dance studios

In Taiwan, it is not common to find a dance studio which only provides belly dance courses. Most studios teach various kinds of dances since many belly dance teachers were trained in other dance genre before taking up belly dancing. In general, the

duration of class in studios is one to one and a half hours, two months (eight weeks) as a term. Some studios are decorated with exotic paraphernalia while others also sell belly dancing outfits and accessories. The class fee ranges from \$300 to \$500 NTD (\$10 to \$15 USD) per class on average (versus \$4 to \$6 USD at community universities); the class size is smaller than those in community universities, under 15 people in general. Because of the relatively small class size instructors are able to take more care of each student and correct their posture and movements.¹²⁰ Students who choose studios typically pursue more dance skills rather than merely take it as an exercise. The average student age is younger than the average at a community university; office ladies and young mothers are the majority.¹²¹ In what follows, I'm going to introduce belly dance classes taught in dance studios.

Fieldwork at belly dance classes in dance studios

Case 1

Institution: Sofia Dance School (Figure 2-34)

Instructor: Sofia

Time: Evening, July 2012

Location: Taipei city

The class started from 7pm, it was a very small class consisting of only six people—the instructor Sofia, four office ladies aged from 25 to 35, and me. Apart from teaching belly dance, Sofia is a certified instructor of yoga and pilates. She adopted lots of movements from yoga and pilates in the first 30 minutes of warming-up, which is the most exhausting warming-up experience that I have ever

¹²⁰ “I used to have 50 students in one class when I was teaching in Community university, I couldn’t see all the students let alone correcting their movements; that kind of class is purely for exercise. Here (her dance school), we don’t have accept more than 20 students in a class.” (Cited from the interview with Sofia)

¹²¹ According to the interview with Riron, Sofia and Chen

had. The class atmosphere was very relaxing, students and instructors freely exchanged words with each other while we were stretching. Sofia was pregnant at the time, so they chatted a lot about her bodily changes and adjustments; some students also brought up topics about work and family. From 7:30 to 8:30, Sofia led us to practice new movements of the choreography as well as to rehearse the choreography with music. During the middle class break, they called the delivery service from a near-by beverage shop and enjoyed the drink together. They told me that all of them had taken Sofia's class for several terms and that is why they are familiar with each other. They all had full-time work in the day time, so they come here to relax, exercise and also expect to learn something new at the same time.



Figure 2-34 The class Schedule of Sofia Dance School
(Photo credit: Sofia Dance School)

After the class, I did an interview with Sofia. She shared her experience of belly dancing and teaching:

“I was not trained as a dancer in school. I was curious when belly dance was initially introduced to Taiwan by Wan-Ru Lee, but her class in Neihu community university was always full. Finally, I took Eva Shen's class in Beitou community

university and I was in Eva's class and troupe for about five years. I have been teaching for six years, now I teach seven days a week in my studio; I perform in the evening or on holidays from time to time. I have no problem doing most of the movements after pregnancy, I only feel a bit uncomfortable when doing twist.....

I started to learn yoga and pilates for the sake of improving my belly dancing. Pilatis is especially helpful since it trains core muscles a lot. For me, it's very important to strengthen your core muscle because it not only enables you to dance better but also prevents you from injuries.”

Sofia also talked about the belly dancing style that Taiwanese prefer:

“I like Egyptian style. I also got the certificate of ATS but Egyptian is my favorite. In the US, the training of belly dancers usually starts from Oriental (style), then ATS, and then Tribal Fusion. But, ATS is not common here, most Taiwanese students skip ATS and go to Tribal Fusion directly since Tribal Fusion looks cool and novel. Besides, many belly dance teachers fuse other dances with belly dance because they are originally trained in other dances. I was not trained as a dancer in school, and I just like Egyptian style, I like its staidness so I don't like to mingle with other dances in my belly dancing choreography.”

However, she also mentioned that some adjustments are required since traditional Egyptian style is not liked by most Taiwanese people:

“I always consider the occasion when I do choreography. If it's for a competition, we usually do “drum solo”¹²² because it's more exciting and therefore easier to get the admiration of the judges and the audience. But there turns out to be too many “drum solos” in one competition (laugh). Frankly speaking, most events in Taiwan prefer boisterous and lively performances; traditional Egyptian style is too tedious and boring for most Taiwanese people. I used to insist on pure,

¹²² Many belly dance songs from the Middle East are heavy in drum rhythms and drumming is a big part of the music culture. Due to a complete lack of a melody, the drum solo dance is sharp with lots of hip pops, locks, shimmies, and movement layering to mirror the complex drum rhythms. The mood of a drum solo can range from intense to playful to comedic. Most of the time all three moods are portrayed as the dancer chooses to show off her coordination or accent a drum beat with a funny movement like a wink or an unexpected stomach pop (Nyla Chrystal, <http://www.nylacrystal.com/san-francisco-bay-area-belly-dancer/belly-dance-drum-solo/>), accessed August 2nd, 2013

authentic Egyptian style, but I realized later that sometimes you have to compromise with the reality of the market, there is no choice.....”

Sofia is not regularly taking belly dance classes now, but she continues to pursue advanced trainings by joining foreign masters’ workshops when they come to Taiwan, getting belly dancing certificates from domestic associations (both from TDSF and MCPB) as well as going to big belly dance festivals in Egypt:

“I take part in the competitions and lectures which are routinely held by TDSF. There are always several foreign masters visiting Taiwan every year so I join their workshops to learn new skills or different styles of belly dancing. Usually I get information from the Facebook pages and blogs of other teachers (both Taiwanese teachers and foreign teachers) or from the websites of some dance associations. I have been dancing for long time so I’m acquainted with most teachers in this community, we can easily exchange information on the internet.

More American and Latin American dancers than Egyptian dancers have been invited to teach workshops in Taiwan, I think it’s due to the preference of Taiwanese belly dance community. They used to invite some Egyptian dancers but the response from the market was not good; comparatively, American and Latin American style, such as BDSS¹²³ and Aida,¹²⁴ are far more embraced in Taiwan.”

Case 2

Institution: Tsy-yin Dance Studio

Instructor: Lotus

Time: Noon, August 2012

Location: New Taipei city

Lotus’s dance studio locates at the upstairs of her apartment (Figure 2-35, 2-36). She has more than twenty-year experience of teaching ballroom dance and dancesport

¹²³ The abbreviation of *Belly Dance Superstars*, an international well-known dance and music troupe founded in the United States

¹²⁴ A famous Russian belly dancer

(Figure 2-37), and she started learning and teaching belly dance since 2004.¹²⁵ In addition to teaching in her studio, she is a belly dance instructor of a community university and a student belly dance club of an elementary school in New Taipei city.¹²⁶



I arrived at Tsy-yin Dance Studio around 11am. Lotus was instructing a student who was going to do solo dance in an upcoming competition held after the summer. Half hour later, more students came to practice a group choreography that they were going to compete in the same competition. It was not scheduled as a formal class, so students quickly stretched themselves and started to do group rehearsal with music; some students put on their performing costumes (Figure 2-38, 2-39). Lotus was standing aside, watching and reminding students about their facial expressions, movements and formation change. At the same time, there was a little boy playing around the classroom (Figure 2-40), I heard from Lotus that he just got the second

¹²⁵ Ballroom dance is a set of partner dances, which are enjoyed both socially and competitively around the world. It usually refers to the International Standard and International Latin style dances. These styles were developed in England, and are now regulated by the World Dance Council (WDC). Dancesport denotes competitive ballroom dancing as contrasted to social or exhibition dancing.

¹²⁶ I did fieldwork at Lotus's class at Lu-chiang elementary school in August 2011

place from 2012 Beijing International Belly Dance Festival. Lotus pointed her finger to one of those students who were dancing and said, “That’s his mom, she always brings him to the class because nobody can look after him at home. At first he was just waiting or playing by himself, later, he practiced with us sometimes and eventually became a better dancer than his mom is (laugh)!”



Figure 2-37 Lotus is a prize winner and an experienced judge of ballroom dance and belly dance

I was chatting with Lotus during their break, and she shared her experience of belly dancing.

“In the beginning I was learning in Eva Shen’s dance school. Later on, Eva introduced the certificate system (MCPB) so I joined the training course and got the certificate after passing the final exam which was held in Egypt, and then I started to teach belly dance. Subsequently, I got to know the Federation (TDSF) and joined their training courses. I have got several certificates issued by TDSF (Coach-grade B & C; Judge-grade C).”

Lotus takes part in belly dance related activities almost every day, either for teaching or learning. She doesn’t have preference for style or music, “It’s all fusion now!” she said. In particular, she likes to add local cultural elements in her

choreography.

“I fused Taiwanese indigenous people’s culture and dance in some belly dancing choreographies. I also use a Chinese umbrella as a prop, or add plots in choreographies. I have taken students to join several international competitions and I noticed that Korean dancers frequently fuse their traditional cultural elements with belly dance. Last month in Beijing International Belly Dance Festival, many Chinese dancers combined their ethnic dances with belly dance. It seems a trend to fuse some local culture into choreographies when competing abroad. Keep following the traditional style is very monotonous.

I usually get inspirations for choreography from videos posted on the internet. You can find tons of belly dancing videos of dancers in different countries as well as choreographies in various styles. The internet makes it very convenient!”



Lotus is also the chairperson of two dance organizations in Lu-chou district (蘆洲區), so I was interested to know more about her teaching and promoting philosophy of belly dance. Lotus shared:

“Lu-chou Health Dance Sports Association (蘆洲健康舞蹈運動協會) is for ballroom dancing; Lu-chou Physical Education Association Committee of Middle Eastern Dance (蘆洲區體育會中東肚皮舞委員會), which I founded three years ago, is for promoting belly dance. I think my mission is to promote

healthy exercise in my local community. The age span of students in my belly dance class ranges from three to over 70 years old, but the major group is middle-aged moms like me, so my motivation is to promote community based activities for moms. Our Middle Eastern Belly Dance Committee just held our second competition in this June (Figure 2-41).”

Was the competition only for dancers who are Lu-chou residents? I asked.

“No, actually it was supposed to be open for anybody, but it turned out to be there was no capacity left for people from outside because we have many student from Lu-chou (laugh).....I always encourage students to join competitions, it doesn’t matter the result is good or not, I don’t expect them to become professional dancers (for competitions), I just want to encourage those moms to exercise and have fun through belly dancing, to become healthier and more confident.”

Lotus also mentioned there is no problem to teach students from different age groups in the same class.

“No problem at all, it’s an exercise! Many grandmoms or moms bring their grandkids or kids to practice in the class together. Like her (pointed to one student), her four-year old girl sometimes comes to play in the class together, the little girl also performed last time, she looked very cute on the stage.”



Figure 2-40 A young prize winner of 2012 Beijing International Belly Dance Festival

Figure 2-41 The poster of the 2nd Lu-chou district Middle Eastern belly dance competition

Case 3

Institution: Butterfly Dance School-Beauty training class (Figure 2-42)

Instructor: Liron

Time: Evening, August 2012

Location: Taichung city



Figure 2-42 The logo of Butterfly Dance Studio
(Photo credit: Butterfly Dance Studio)

Liron's studio is located at a three-storey townhouse in Taichung city, the biggest city in central Taiwan. The studio teaches various kinds of exotic dances including Middle Eastern belly dance, Tahitian hula, Indian Bollywood dance, Indian Odissi dance and yoga (Figure 2-43, 2-44).¹²⁷ There is a reception desk, a rest area and a small space displaying practice outfits, costumes and accessories for students to purchase in the first floor of the studio. Liron was instructing an elementary school girl when I arrived. The little girl put on pretty costumes; she was practicing the choreography for

¹²⁷ Odissi traces its origins to the ritual dances performed in the temples of ancient northern India. The current form of Odissi is the product of a 20th century revival. Dedicated scholars and dance enthusiasts carefully researched manuscripts and studied the sculpture, painting and poetry of the region. They also met and observed the performances of the few existing performers, in order to revive and restructure Odissi as a unique classical dance style adapted to the requirements of formal stage presentation. Over the years Odissi has become one of the most popular classical dance styles (Text by Anjana Rajan <http://www.artindia.net/odissi.html>), accessed December 20th, 2013

competing in the kids division of the 9th Taiwan Belly Dance Open Competition.

Subsequently, I climbed up to the classroom in the second floor to join the advanced class that I planned to observe. There were eight students in the class aged around 30-50. After twenty minutes of warming-up, Liron started to teach new choreography with a music sung by a Lebanese pop singer. Because it was an advanced class, the choreography was more complicated which requires better skills and the ability of movement combination. Students in that class picked up the choreography quickly since most of them have had experience of dancing for several years (Figure 2-45).

“The music is very romantic, it’s full of affection. The singer is expressing love to his lover in the lyrics. Listen to the music and don’t forget your facial expression and emotion when you dance!” Liron reminded students.

“I want to show my husband this dance tonight!” One of the students replied.

They practiced the new choreography for around 40 minutes, cooled down by some stretches and ended the class. After the class, six of the students started to practice another choreography for competing in the upcoming national competition.

Liron is a famous young dance instructor in central Taiwan. She founded her dance studio after receiving her MA of dance eight years ago; many of her students have taken big prizes home in national belly dance competitions. I think Liron is taking care of her business and students with heart. Apart from teaching dances, teachers of her studio interview one dance practitioner per month and post the contents of interview on the blog and facebook page of the studio since January 2013. The interview series is named “Special Issues of Wonderful Women (美好女性特刊)” which addresses on the dancing experience of women as well as how the experiences have changed their lives (Figure 2-46). Liron shared her experiences of dancing and

teaching in our interview:

“My studio was aiming at teaching kids’ dance at first, but I soon realized that I’m better getting along with adults so I changed the focus to teach adults’ dance. ‘Adult women’ is the target group of our studio, our aim is to help women open their wings and fly freely, just as the symbolic meaning of the name of our studio “Butterfly dance.”

I have been trained as a dancer since I was young. My major was ethnic dance so I have more interests on exotic dances. Not long after I founded my studio, belly dance became popular in Taipei which inspired me to start exploring belly dance and Indian dance. I stayed in India for a while to learn Indian dance; for belly dance, mostly I learn by myself through watching videos and by attending workshops of foreign masters when they visit Taiwan, I have not been to Egypt so far.

You can easily find lots of information about belly dance on the internet, such as instructing videos, performing videos or even the recording of workshops. Probably my long time experience in ballet, modern dance and ethnic dances enables me to master belly dance faster.”

蝶舞舞蹈中心 2013.3月課表



黑字為已經開班課程 歡迎詢問插班時間 紅字為預計開班課程 歡迎詢問上課資訊

	週一	週二	週三	週四	週五	週六
早	10:00 芭蕾舞 基礎編織	10:00 芭蕾舞 基礎編織	10:00 麗格 初階奧迪西		10:00 麗格 初階寶萊瑪	09:20 宜輝 初階肚皮舞
	10:00 麗格 初階肚皮舞	10:00 麗格 進階肚皮舞	11:00 芭蕾舞 初階肚皮舞	10:00 麗格 初階奧迪西		11:30 麗格 初階奧迪西 台北舞場班
		11:00 芭蕾舞 初階肚皮舞		11:10 麗格 初階肚皮舞	11:00 麗格 進階肚皮舞	13:00 麗格 台北初階奧 迪西
	11:00 芭蕾舞 初階寶萊瑪	12:30 麗格 進階寶萊瑪	12:15 芭蕾舞 初階寶萊瑪	12:30 宜輝 初階大溪地	12:30 宜輝 初階肚皮舞	
晚		17:00 芭蕾舞 兒童流行舞點			15:00 芭蕾舞 初階肚皮舞	
		18:30 芭蕾舞 基礎編織	18:40 麗格 進階寶萊瑪	19:00 宜輝 初階肚皮舞	16:30 芭蕾舞 兒童律動	
	18:40 麗格 進階肚皮舞	19:00 麗格 初階奧迪西	19:00 宜輝 進階肚皮舞	19:00 麗格 初階奧迪西	19:00 宜輝 初階肚皮舞	
	19:30 麗格 初階寶萊瑪	20:30 芭蕾舞 初階肚皮舞	19:40 麗格 初階奧迪西	20:10 麗格 初階肚皮舞	20:10 芭蕾舞 初階寶萊瑪	
	20:30 麗格 進階寶萊瑪	20:00 宜輝 初階律動	20:00 宜輝 初階大溪地			

查詢詳情: [HTTP://TW.MYBLOG.YAHOO.COM/BUTTERFLY-DANCE](http://tw.myblog.yahoo.com/butterfly-dance)
 FB粉絲團: [HTTP://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/TWBDCS](http://www.facebook.com/twbdcs)
 地址: 台中市西區太原路一段40號 電話: (04) 2314-1670

Figure 2-43 Class schedule of Butterfly Dance School

(Photo credit: Butterfly Dance School)

	
<p>Figure 2-44 Flier of Butterfly Dance School (Photo credit: Butterfly Dance School)</p>	<p>Figure 2-45 Dancing in class</p>

I noticed there were many extended movements in the choreography that they just practiced in the class, so I asked if that was a fusion with ballet?

“Yes. Actually, Egyptian style belly dance usually incorporates ballet movements but they may not extend their movements so much as the way I just did, the style is a bit different. Based on my observation, fusion is the most common style in Taiwan, only few dancers are stick to traditional Egyptian style. For me, I like to combine my previous training in classical dances to create a more artistic form of belly dancing. The old impression on belly dance tends to be erotic; I hope to promote something different.”

Do you fuse Taiwanese cultural elements in your choreography? I asked.

“Not really. For me, traditional Taiwanese culture is very Oriental, the emotion is calmer and inward, like The Cloud Gate¹²⁸ incorporates Zen and Chi-kung in their choreography, which doesn’t match the performance of belly dance from my point of view. I sometimes use properties like feather fan or long fan¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Cloud Gate Dance Theatre (雲門舞集) is a modern dance group based in Taiwan. It was founded by choreographer Hwai-min Lin (林懷民) in 1973

¹²⁹ feather fan (羽扇); long fan (長飄扇)

(Figure 2-47), but these properties are also common in China, they are not exclusive to Taiwan actually, maybe it depends on how you define Taiwanese culture.”

 <p>蝶舞美好女性特刊_陳姚光 頸椎沒有開刀，也已經不需要再吃止痛藥了。 姚光：「跳舞讓我很開心，我現在身體變好了，心靈也沈澱了！」</p>	 <p>雙扇肚皮舞，等妳來挑戰</p> <p>慢板、中板、快板 音樂層次鮮明豐富/起承轉合舞碼多變</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <th>日期</th> <th>時間</th> <th>報名專線</th> <th>上課地點</th> </tr> <tr> <td>12/09/21</td> <td>11:30-12:30</td> <td>(04) 2314-1670</td> <td>台中市西區太原路一段40號</td> </tr> </table>	日期	時間	報名專線	上課地點	12/09/21	11:30-12:30	(04) 2314-1670	台中市西區太原路一段40號
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<p>Figure 2-46 Butterfly Dance “Special Issues of Wonderful Women” Vol.2 (Photo credit: Butterfly Dance School)</p>	<p>Figure 2-47 Belly dance with long fan (Photo credit: Butterfly Dance School)</p>								

We also talked about her teaching philosophy and the composition of students in the studio. Liron said:

“Students in my belly dance classes are mostly office ladies or housewives aged from 25 to 45 since you need to be financially capable to a certain degree to afford learning leisure dance in a studio. Generally speaking, younger students learn in school clubs or Community universities where the class fees are cheaper.....

Now I teach everyday during the week; I perform sometimes for workshops or big-scaled promotions. I strongly encourage my students and other teachers of my studio to perform and join competitions, it doesn't matter you win or not, I just want them to have the courage to try, to face the public. I really think performing in public is the best way to help students accepting themselves, believing their possibilities and becoming more confident.”

Chapter 3 The local features of Taiwanese belly dance

Based on data collected in this study, I conclude that there are five features of the development of belly dance in Taiwan. In this chapter, I will introduce each of them and explore how these local features have been shaped up. I will make some comparison between the representation of belly dance in Taiwan and in other countries.

3-1 Community based classes and performances

In my analysis of Taiwanese news coverage about belly dance, I noticed that reports generally evolve around three topics: the benefits of belly dancing, belly dance performances appear in domestic events and competitions, and Taiwanese belly dancers' victories in international competitions (Chang 2012b).

Previous Taiwanese studies have pointed out that “exercise, body slimming, relaxation, femininity, and exotic feeling” are the main allures for Taiwanese women to learn the dance (Lee 2007; Chang 2009; Tsai 2009; Ge 2009). However, except for dancing in the classrooms, Chang (2009) pointed out that belly dance performances show up at various kinds of Taiwanese events; my previous study also noticed that reports regarding belly dance performances at local events frequently appear in Taiwanese media (Chang 2012b). Considering the short history of belly dance in Taiwan since 2002, it is interesting to explore how the dance quickly spread to so many local communities.

Chen (2007) suggests that associations promoting belly dance, which have been founded in different part of Taiwan, have made major contributions to the prosperity of the dance. Through reviewing the developing history of belly dance in Taiwan and doing fieldwork in dance studios, I argue that the cooperation between belly dance

instructors and the dominant adult education institute—community university, which has about 100 branches in all over the island—have played the most crucial role in the rapid expansion of the dance. Besides, I noticed in my fieldwork and interviews with belly dance practitioners that most Taiwanese instructors enthusiastically encourage students to perform, which may have resulted to the common scene of belly dance performances around the island.

In contrast with Egypt or some Western countries where belly dance shows usually occur in nightclubs or ethnic restaurants locate in big cities targeting foreign tourists (Maira 2008; Potuoğlu-Cook 2006; Nieuwkerk 1995; Shay & Sellers-Young 1993), most public belly dance performances in Taiwan appear at local events. I divide belly dance performances in Taiwan into three categories (Table 3-1) and introduce each of them as follows.

Table 3-1 Three categories of belly dance performances in Taiwan

Category	Event	Place/Charge	Audience	Dancer
Private or semi- public	Achievement shows of Community universities and dance studios	Indoor/free	Students, teachers, family, friends	amateur
Public-volunteer	Festivals, community events	Outdoor/ volunteer or little pay	Local residents, festival goers	amateur
Public-commercial (the fewest)	Restaurants, weddings, company parties, construction shows, religious festivals	Outdoor or indoor/paid	Festival goers, customers	professional or semi-professional

Private or semi public

As mentioned earlier, the last week of most belly dance classes in Community

universities is scheduled as an “achievement show.” At the day, instructors usually divide the class into small groups and let each group decide their way of performance. This kind of performance is private since the audience is only composed of their classmates. Some community universities hold school-wide achievement show in the end of each semester. In this kind of event, students can watch the shows of other classes and learn to know the style and feature of others’. Many dance studios also host annual performances for students to show their learning results. These studio performances and the achievement shows organized by community universities usually don’t charge entrance fees; the audience primarily consists of students and teachers of the classes as well as their family and friends.

Public-volunteer

Volunteer performances occupy the biggest portion of belly dance shows in Taiwan. In my analysis of Taiwanese news coverage of 2010 (Chang 2012b), I found belly dance performances frequently show up in various kinds of local community events (Table 3-2). While belly dance shows in clubs or restaurants in other countries are generally performed by professional dancers, shows in local Taiwanese events are voluntarily performed by amateur dancers, usually in their 30s to 60s, who are members of community belly dance clubs or nearby dance studios. Many of these amateur dancers see performing as a way of giving support to those local events with poor budgets, through which they also get a stronger sense of being a part of their community. In our interview, Lucy explained why she and her students do more volunteer performances:

“My students are all middle-aged moms and we primarily do volunteer performances. This kind of performance is not that demanding because we already perform for free. For commercial performance, first, they want you to be sexy; second, they prefer young dancers; third, you need to prepare several sets

of gorgeous costumes.”

Table 3-2 Events including belly dance performance in 2010

Name of occasion	Category of occasion	Reported date	Source of information
Tse-ra Noodle Carnival of Lujhou Township	festival of local specialty	2010/08/22	The Liberty Times
Chinese Valentine’s Day Evening Party of Hsinchu City	traditional culture	2010/08/16	The Liberty Times
Eco-friendly Carnival in Hsinchu City	Environment awareness	2010/08/10	The Liberty Times
Award Ceremony for Father of Single-parent Family	Education	2010/08/01	Yahoo News Taiwan
Fruit Festival of Jhuolan Township	festival of agriculture product	2010/07/21	Now News
Music Art Season of Lontan Township	art	2010/07/09	The Liberty Times
Traditional Arts Festival of Kaohsiung County	folk art	2010/06/12	The Liberty Times
Spring Concert of Taichung City	Art	2010/05/25	CNA News
Bring Warmth to Penghu Jail	Social	2010/02/09	The Liberty Times

Cited from Chang (2012b)

I also noticed during my fieldwork that many local activities need to recruit performing groups with very limited budget. This becomes an important reason that they prefer to invite students of dance classes in community universities or troupes of

local dance studios to perform since they cannot afford the charge of professional performers. Belly dance has spread among many local communities as exercise through community universities all over Taiwan, plus it is performable and worth watching, which have made it a “constant guest” in community events.

Public-commercial

In terms of commercial performance in Taiwan, belly dancers are usually invited to perform at events like company parties, opening ceremonies, construction shows, weddings and local religious festivals. More recently, a couple of exotic restaurants and café started to cooperate with dance studios or dance troupes to provide belly dance shows. Those shows are usually scheduled on the weekends or on reservation basis. Table 3-3 shows the restaurants providing belly dance shows in Taiwan.

Table 3-3 Restaurants providing belly dance shows in Taiwan

Name	Location
Nakhla Middle Eastern water pipe restaurant 那哈拉中東水煙餐廳	New Taipei city
Persian Heaven Restaurant 波斯天堂	Taipei city
Yu-Mu Café Kitchen 魚木人文咖啡廚房	Taipei city
Uriel's Exotic Cuisine 烏列爾異國創意料理	Kaohsiung city
Café No.7 七號咖啡館	New Taipei city

Data collected by this research

In the beginning when belly dance was introduced to Taiwan, it appeared as a body-slimming exercise dance taught in dance classes which welcomes women of all

ages and various body types to join. Many teachers encourage their students to do volunteering performances since they see performing a good opportunity for students to appreciate their own beauty, and to enhance confidence. However, similar to Lucy's experience, Aisha pointed out the realistic requests on dancers' appearance when it comes to commercial shows:

“We don't have specific preference on dancers' body shapes in the annual show of our troupe; volunteer shows are just similar; in terms of commercial performance, this is cruel.....many customers made clear in the beginning of our talk that they just want young and pretty dancers, commercial performance is a totally different case.”

During analyzing Taiwanese news coverage of belly dance, I noticed that reports about commercial belly dance shows are increasing although the amount of reports remains relatively small. Further studies will be necessary to keep track of the future development of this trend.

3-2 Mature women as major participants

The alliance with Community universities has extensive influences on the development of belly dance in Taiwan. Apart from helping the dance quickly spread to local communities, I think it also affects the demographics of Taiwanese belly dance participants.¹³⁰ The relatively low registration fee of the community university system makes belly dance class affordable to women of various social classes in Taiwan, which is different from the situation in Japan and China where belly dance is still more exclusive as a middle-class women's leisure activity (Table 3-4).¹³¹

In my fieldwork and interview, I noticed the age of belly dance learners and

¹³⁰ Housewives and elder women comprised the majority of students at community university, especially in belly dance classes

¹³¹ The cost of instructor training program in China is particularly high (http://www.dupiwu.com/qwys/0305_633.shtml), accessed August 20th, 2013

competition participants ranges widely, however the majority group consists of mature women and mothers.¹³² As a response to the large numbers of elderly belly dancers, the organizers of Taiwan Belly Dance Open Competition added “the Golden Age Division” (above 60 years old) in 2007.¹³³ Furthermore, since many belly dance participants are moms, Taiwan Belly Dance Mama Competition has been held annually since 2010 (Figure 3-1). Nowadays, it is easy to find classes teaching various kinds of pop dances and leisure dances all over Taiwan.¹³⁴ However, belly dance may have the biggest population of mature women participants (Chang 2009:90). Belly dance instructor Hui-Lan Lee shared her opinion on mature women’s enthusiasm to belly dance in a news interview:¹³⁵

“Women comprise the majority of yoga and dance classes of Yonkan community center in Tainan. In the beginning, few people joined the class because of the sexy stereotype of belly dance. However, word-of-mouth advertising has attracted much more people to the class that some people even have to wait for vacancies to sign up now. Women devoted themselves to family and children thus neglecting their own needs and interests in early years, but belly dancing gives them a chance to pursue their dreams bravely and show their confidence when their responsibility to family is not such a burden as before.”

Previous studies suggest that “no dance experience required” and “moderate movements” are also important features of belly dance which allow more elderly women feel comfortable to join (Ge 2009; Lee 2007). As belly dance lecturer Chien-Hue Kao mentioned in a news report:

¹³² 25 to 45 years old in dance studios; 35 to 60 years old in Community universities. According to my observation and informal interviews with belly dance instructors in Japan and the United States, the majority group of belly dance participants in Taiwan is about ten years older in age than in the other two countries. The average age of participants is a bit higher than in other countries

¹³³ LT Sports, *Belly Dance Grand Meeting, December 30 in Taipei*. Retrieved, August 28, 2010, from http://www.ltsports.com.tw/main/news.asp?no=54874&N_Class=1

¹³⁴ For example, social dance, dance sport, salsa dance, tango, flamingo dance, Indian dance, Jazz, street dance, aerobics, etc.

¹³⁵ The Liberty Times, *Grandmoms and Moms, Belly Dancing Together*. Retrieved, August 18, 2010, from <http://www.libertytimes.com.tw/2010/new/feb/19/today-so11.htm>

“Belly dance is very healthy. There are few jumping movements in the dance, thus minimizing the risk of sports injuries. Besides, the muscles used in belly dancing, especially those on the back and abdomen, are not often exercised in daily life. Exercising those muscles is helpful to relieve lower back pain and curve the waist at the same time.”¹³⁶

Several interviewees of this research teach belly dance as well as other kind of dance, thus I asked them to share the differences between belly dance and other dances in terms of the way of movement. Aisha is a belly dance instructor who also holds an aerobic coach certificate. She mentioned the “impact differences” between belly dance and aerobic dance:

“We can easily adjust the (belly) dance style for students of different age groups so as to minimize injuries; this is my own experience. When I was learning aerobics, many students did not know the right way to exercise strength, especially when doing some high-impact movements, many of them got injured in the end. However, belly dancing movements mainly rely on the control of muscle and breath so injuries can be easily avoided. ”

Lotus has more than 20 years experience of teaching ballroom dance,¹³⁷ and she has been teaching belly dance for more than eight years. She shared in our interview:

“Many students came to my studio and asked: Which one (belly dance or ballroom dance) should I learn first? I always answered ‘Belly dance’ because it’s easier for a beginner. I suggest students to get the rhythm of dancing first (through belly dance training), and then you can learn ballroom dance as the next step if you like. Um....ballroom dance is not easy to continue, there are many problems regarding dance partners or the level of dancing skills, yet you don’t confront those issues in belly dancing, you just dance however you like!

¹³⁶ CNA News, *Shake belly, dancing to a healthy and happy life*. Retrieved, August 25, 2010, from <http://www.cna.com.tw/SearchNews/doDetail.aspx?id=201007100052&q=%e8%82%9a%e7%9a%ae%e8%88%9e>

¹³⁷ Ballroom dance has long history in Taiwan as a leisure dance

Many students stop belly dancing for a while and then return, I think it is because belly dance is just easier to take up.....of course the training of a professional dancer is another case, but our aim here is to promote “easy, healthy and community-based exercise.”

She also explained why belly dance is a better option for mature adults comparing to ballroom dance and dancesport:

“Explosiveness is highly valued in ballroom dance and dancesports, but, no matter how skillful you are, it’s hard to display speed and power when you get old. However, you need neither speed nor much strength in belly dancing, aging will never be a limit. To the contrary, aging and experience enrich your life, which make your (belly) dance profound.”

Table 3-4 The fees of belly dance class in Taiwan, Japan, USA and China

Country	Institute	Class fee per hour
Taiwan	Community university	\$2.3~2.5 ¹³⁸
	Dance school	\$5.5~ \$10.2 ¹³⁹
		\$17.4/hr ¹⁴⁰ (Instructor training course)
Japan	Dance school	\$25.4 ~ \$32 ¹⁴¹
USA	Dance school	\$8~\$15/hr ¹⁴²
China	Dance school	\$5.7~\$13/hr ¹⁴³
		\$1307~\$1470/ 45days ¹⁴⁴ (Instructor training course)

¹³⁸ 66.7-74 TWD/hr, Community university official website

¹³⁹ 160-300 TWD/hr, Sofia dance school, Arabesque Bellydance Studio

¹⁴⁰ 511 TWD/hr, Crystal belly dance studio

¹⁴¹ 2500-3150 JPY/hr, Studio FODSS(Tokyo) and Chillout Studio (Osaka)

¹⁴² Data collected from Bellyqueen (NYC) and Dance Complex (Boston)

¹⁴³ 35-80 CNY/hr, <http://dance.looedu.com/2012/0110/24404.shtml> (Beijing)

¹⁴⁴ 8000-9000 CNY/45 days, <http://dance.looedu.com/2012/0110/24404.shtml> (Beijing)



Figure 3-1 Poster of 2012 Taiwan Belly Dance Mama Competition

Although mature women make up the majority of belly dance participants in Taiwan, the number of young participants is growing gradually.¹⁴⁵ Liron has extensive experience in dancing and teaching both classical¹⁴⁶ and leisure dances, and she compares the difference between belly dance for adults and belly dance for children based on her experience.¹⁴⁷

“It’s usually the moms’ idea to make their kids learn belly dance. Some moms feel classical ballet, folkdance and modern dance are out-of-date, or they think the training of those classical dances is too hard. They found that belly dance become popular recently, and it doesn’t take long time before you can perform on stage so they chose this kind of leisure/entertaining dance for their kids to develop more talents and skills.

When I was young, nobody was learning this kind of dance (leisure/non-classic dance), especially belly dance is kind of entertainment-oriented, and the costume

¹⁴⁵ See Chapter 3

¹⁴⁶ Folk, ballet, modern dance

¹⁴⁷ Liron is famous in Central Taiwan for teaching belly dance and Odissi dance

is revealing. But now, it's very common to see people wearing sexy costumes, maybe because of the influences of mass media and the change of social atmosphere, most parents and the public are more open-minded.”

From Liron's account, we can see the different purposes between kid belly dance and mature women belly dance.¹⁴⁸ Parents send their kids to learn belly dance for fun or for acquiring a new talent rather than for body slimming, exercise or relaxation, which are the major motivations of women participants.¹⁴⁹ Besides, several interviewees mentioned the emphasis of movements on “waist, abdomen and hip” as one big feature of belly dancing,¹⁵⁰ which make it particularly appealing to women who have gone through childbirth¹⁵¹ as well as office ladies who are used to a sedentary life style.¹⁵² By doing the dance, they can work out those body parts that they don't usually exercise in daily life or even in doing other kinds of exercise, which may also be a reason that belly dance has attracted so many mature women participants.

3-3 Highlight the effects for body-beauty and femininity enhancing

Previous studies assert that both North African and American belly dancers feel their dance imparts a sense of mental empowerment, nevertheless, their interpretations of mental empowerment differ. North African dancers describe this empowerment as having fun, communicating with others and feeling confident, while American dancers associate this sense of empowerment with spirituality,¹⁵³ feminist ideas,

¹⁴⁸ Her observation is similar to another interviewee, Lotus, who is an instructor of an elementary school belly dance club

¹⁴⁹ Findings of my interview corresponds to the arguments of previous studies (Chang 2009; Tsai 2009; Lee 2007), almost all interviewees identified either exercise or body slimming to be there motivation.

¹⁵⁰ Interview with Chen, Aisha and Lucy

¹⁵¹ After childbirth, many women have trouble getting rid of the fat accumulated on their stomachs, suffered from the loose belly or stretch mark problem

¹⁵² People in the sedentary life style easily accumulate fat on their belly and thighs, and flat hips

¹⁵³ Spiritual connection with ancient earth goddess

personal liberation and alternative body image.¹⁵⁴ In my study, I also noticed that strong feminist wording or spiritual experience is not commonly used in Taiwan when practitioners and the media describe empowerment through belly dancing. I ascribe the phenomenon to the fact that the linkage made between belly dance, empowerment, women's confidence and health has its cultural and historical roots in American society. Although similar terms have been transplanted to Taiwan, the interpretation varies. Based on data collected in this study, I argue that the media discourse of women's confidence (the confidence gained through body-slimming and the enhancement of feminine charm) and the traditional belief of Chinese medicine "Exercise is medicine," are the most frequently referred roots of the therapeutic power of belly dancing in Taiwan.

As mentioned in the first chapter, women's leisure exercise in Taiwan is frequently promoted for body-slimming or body-beauty since the 1990s. "Exercise, body slimming, femininity (女人味) and confidence" are the prevalent "buzzwords" in belly dance related news articles, advertisements and the homepages of belly dance studios and instructors—sometimes the four words are even purposely marketed as the selling point of the product.¹⁵⁵ Generally speaking, Taiwanese media report belly dance in a positive tone and frequently highlight its "benefits for fitness." Here is a picture excerpted from the coverage about the 21st TAFISA¹⁵⁶ World Congress held in Taiwan in 2009 (Figure 3-2). The coverage mentioned: "A lecturer of AFAA¹⁵⁷ performed belly dance and instructed all participants to move together and experience this novel aerobic exercise."¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁴ See Chapter 1, Haynes-Clark (2010) and Downey et al. (2010)

¹⁵⁵ Example the flier of some belly dance studios showed in Chapter 2

¹⁵⁶ TAFISA (Trim and Fitness International Sport for All) is an international NGO approved by IOC, that aims to promote sport for all and physical fitness.

¹⁵⁷ AFAA (Aerobics and Fitness Association of America)

¹⁵⁸ LT Sports, *Belly Dance, Aerobic Boxing, Exercise Together in the 21th AFAA Congress*. Retrieved,



Figure 3-2 Experiencing belly dance at TAFISA World Congress

Body-beauty and health

Apart from fitness, Taiwanese media usually highlight the effectiveness of belly dance in helping body-slimming and body-sculpturing as well as how it helps women to regain their confidence. The following is a typical piece shared by a belly dance lecturer Hue-Lan Lee in a news interview:

“I was very unhappy and lost self-confidence when my weight went up to 115kg after childbirth, but I got rid of 65 kg within five months by diet and belly dancing. The dance emphasizes movements on waist, abdomen and hip, together with arms motion to exercise almost the whole body in a moderate way, avoiding injuries from strenuous exercise. I usually tell my students that regardless of your ability to dance, the most important thing is to get aerobic exercise for fitness and find your own beauty from it. The benefits of belly dancing include weight loss and figure-shaping through exercise, its graceful movements have a female charm thus it has been especially embraced by women.”¹⁵⁹

In my interviews, many people shared how the idea of body-slimming is tightly connected with belly dance in Taiwan. Chen is the chair of Taiwan Dance Association as well as a dance teacher. In our interview, he shared his viewpoint on the prosperous development of belly dance in Taiwan.

August 28, 2010, from http://www.ltsports.com.tw/main/news.asp?no=70665&N_Class=1

¹⁵⁹ The Liberty Times, *Get Rid of 65kg by Belly Dance*. Retrieved, August 18, 2010, from <http://www.libertytimes.com.tw/2010/new/feb/19/today-so11-2.htm>

“When the first teacher introduced belly dance to Taiwan,¹⁶⁰ she didn’t promote it as a folk dance but as an “exercise dance,” she highlighted that it’s something for body slimming.

Frankly speaking, we always say belly dance is good for body slimming, but other exercises or dances have the same function, don’t they? Bringing a folk dance into the realm of “slimming dance” makes it more marketable, this is crucial to its success in Taiwan. Have you ever heard people saying how slim you can be by doing social dance or street dance? It’s not commonly described like it is in belly dance.”

Hawaiian ethnic dance—Hula has been practiced as a leisure dance in many places out of its origin, and is especially popular among Japanese women.¹⁶¹ The dance was introduced to Taiwan at around the same period of time as belly dance was, but it hasn’t got much attention until today. Since “exotic image” is usually regarded as one of the attractions of belly dance, I was curious why Hula dance seems not that attractive to Taiwanese women even though it’s also an ‘exotic dance.’ Some interviewees shared their opinions to my doubt,

“I used to learn Hula dance and open a Hula class in my studio a couple years ago but my students didn’t like it. There are many hand movements in Hula so they felt Hula dancing is more like doing sign language, rather than exercise. They wanted to do something to make them sweat, to make them feel they are doing “exercise” so that they can become healthier and slimmer. For most of the mature students, they don’t come here to master a dance, it is not their main or only goal, they are here for exercise” (Lotus)

Chen directly pointed out:

“Any dance involves ‘body slimming’ benefits can easily get attention in Taiwan.

¹⁶⁰ Wan-Ru Lee, the first one to actively promote belly dance in Taiwan propagated the “figure shaping” and “body slimming” benefits of belly dancing (Tsai 2009:4)

¹⁶¹ Hula is popular among Japanese women across different age groups (Stillman1999:60-61)

That's why Hawaiian (Hula) dance can't be popular in Taiwan because it doesn't help to lose weight!"

For some dance students, attending a dance class may be the only exercise activity they do in a whole week, they think it helps them to get rid of stress and to keep their shape. Fifi shared her interaction with students in class,

"My students are always happy when they come to my class, and they say attending my classes is really helpful in relieving stress. They are looking forward to the class every week, when I ask for leave, they always murmured like 'Oh, I am going to have two weeks without dancing class, without exercise.....no exercise for two weeks will make me fat again!'

Maybe they will not truly gain weight but they are haunted by this kind of thinking, they are afraid the lack of exercise will lead to weight gain or the loss of a good shape."

Femininity and confidence

Compared to fitness and body slimming, femininity is not commonly described as a feature of an exercise. The movements and costumes of belly dance are more feminine than other leisure exercise/dances that have targeted mature Taiwanese women as their major participants.¹⁶² Although some Taiwanese studies have noted that "femininity" is also an important selling point that attracts women to the dance (Chang 2009; Tsai 2009), there has been no further exploration so far. In this section, I'm going to show how Taiwanese dancers experience, interpret and practice the femininity of belly dance as well as how it relates to the discourse of confidence improvement.

During my interviews, I found most dancers think they become more feminine

¹⁶² Folk dance, Taichi, ballroom dance, gymnastics and etc.

after learning belly dance, but I think what has contributed to the change does not just come from dancing itself. Sofia has been doing belly dance for seven years. In the beginning, she took belly dance purely as an exercise for body slimming, but finally she found the involvement in belly dancing has made her more feminine. Compared to other exercises and dances, “feminizing” is a distinctive feature of belly dance in her case, Sofia shared,

“My initial motivation to practice belly dancing was purely for exercise and body slimming. Belly dance was a novelty to the Taiwanese at the time so I felt like trying, and then, I stuck with it till now (laughs).

I have been doing exercise routinely for long time, and I used to take Jazz dance classes. For me, belly dancing is just different from other exercises. I’m an office lady and I always go somewhere to work out after work, but no matter what I do, it’s just exercise which never has extra influences on me (such as temperament and style). But, after taking up belly dance, I look at myself very often and I started to care more about my appearance. You feel you need to have confidence, also, maybe because the costumes expose your belly, for me, it sort of became a drive to be slimmer since I want to look better in my gorgeous costume! My husband also said that I have become more feminine after learning belly dance.”

Most of the students in Lotus’s classes are middle-aged moms living in her neighborhood. She always encourages students to perform or join competitions because she finds it helpful for students to pay more attention on themselves, especially on things regarding their **appearance**. Lotus said,

“Most of my students are moms so they have to take care of kids and family, some of them also have work in the day time. The lives of moms are very busy and tiring, full of duties. Actually many of them don’t pay much attention to their appearance and seldom dress up. Getting involved in belly dance (belly dance related classes, performances or competitions) gives them an opportunity and space to have fun. Before performances or competitions, we usually discuss

costume, makeup or hair style with each other in class. Now, some of them wear light makeup or pay more attention to their clothing even in everyday life.”

Eva started her first belly dance class as her mom’s companion, and she found that belly dance inspired her to explore her inner femininity that she usually neglected in everyday life. She remarked:

“Nowadays, females are getting farther and farther from that (being feminine), there are common ideals like: You have to be capable in the workplace; you can’t behave weakly and etc., you have been taught not to behave like that (feminine, vulnerable) since your youth. However, feminine charm is especially emphasized in belly dancing. For example, my personality is quite unisex, however, because of learning and teaching this dance, I have to explore and develop my feminine part which does help me to embrace my femininity.”

Many Western studies mentioned that belly dance class sometimes becomes a special time/space for students to “explore/display their femininity” that is not encouraged in their daily lives (Kraus 2010a; Deagon 2005; Crobsy 2000; Shay and Sellers-Young 1993). Eva noticed a similar phenomenon in her class,

“You can feel totally free (no worries about social norms) to display your femininity in belly dance class, teachers would even correct you if you don’t do it enough. Things like this rarely happen in the daily life context and many students found it interesting.

Like most belly dance teachers, I don’t force students to uncover their bellies or to wear sexy attire in class, just wear whatever you feel comfortable. However, most students naturally putting on sexier clothes as time goes on. It is kind of weird to wear a lot when everybody around you wears sexy attires. Most students are naturally assimilated by the environment. The sexier, the more revealing, the better! This is fun for many women.”

Chen also mentioned what belly dance costumes mean to some students:

“The costumes do bring the dance to another level. Although you have not danced very well, putting on the costumes alone makes you look stunning and feminine. For me, belly dance is the best dance/exercise that combines beauty and body slimming.

Nowadays, you can find belly dance costumes in nice quality priced only \$2000 to 3000 NTD,¹⁶³ but students are influenced by (or compare themselves with) each other in the class. Some are willing to spend more, some prefer overseas imports. There are also rich women who always expect to purchase exquisite and expensive costumes which are brought back by their teachers from Egypt.”

Within the literature of feminist perspectives on gender, the body, and leisure, gender as a display or performance is a well-accepted concept, as “feminizing and masculinizing” practices associated with the body are at the heart of the social construction of gender identity (Moe 2012; Bordo 1993; Butler 1990; Whitson 1990). Since belly dance was imported to Taiwan, it has been mainly promoted for its benefits of body-slimming, as well as for making women feel more sexy, feminine and confident. In my study, I found that few women really lose lots of weight through belly dancing although that is their primary motivation. Yet, most interviewees in my study mentioned that they found themselves more feminine and confident after learning belly dance. Why is this the case?

I think the influence comes not merely from the dance itself, but rather from the feminine-encouraged aura of the belly dance community, which may have played a more influential role in participants’ self-feminization.¹⁶⁴ I think the feminization includes both tangible and intangible aspects. Emphasizing appearance and wearing more feminine outfits are visible changes. ‘Cuter smile here!’ ‘Be more charming!’

¹⁶³ \$70 to \$100 USD

¹⁶⁴ My argument is inspired by Tsai (2009:13-14)

In a belly dance class, you can always hear teachers reminding students of different emotional expressions when practicing choreography, and sometimes students remind each other as well. Most of the expressions in belly dance are feminine-related, which are not encouraged to be expressed in mature women's daily life. As we see in the accounts of the interviewees, the class sort of becomes a special time and space for participants to explore, discover and retrieve their femininity, which was abandoned, hidden, or forgotten in daily life.

Thus, I argue, although the movements of belly dance have a feminine nature, what plays a more important role in the process of self-feminization is the subculture of the belly dance community. A feminine community holds the belief that femininity can be improved by altering the appearance (body shape, makeup, outfits), and encourages the notion that such self-improvement leads to self-appreciation and confidence. Within Taiwanese belly dance community, the dominant ideology of women's confidence gaining is different from the empowerment through changing one's inner body image, through connecting with ancient goddesses or by challenging patriarchal oppression, which are more commonly embraced by its American counterpart.

3-4 Diverse training, the hybrid Middle East

In Taiwan, the fusion with other dances or cultural elements is commonly seen in belly dance choreographies and costumes although the dance is primarily promoted as a Middle Eastern tradition.¹⁶⁵ Various styles of belly dance fusion are covered by Taiwanese media:

“In the 4th National Dance Sports Performance and Awarding Ceremony where senior dancer Mei-Hue Lai showed the audience a brand-new dance fusion by

¹⁶⁵ The term “Middle Eastern belly dance(中東肚皮舞)” is commonly used on media reports, flyers or the name of belly dance classes

incorporating traditional Chinese dragon and lion dance with belly dance (Figure 3-3). Other fusion styles represented in the event including Chicago jazz belly dance, American tribal belly dance, and hip hop belly dance.” (LT Sports, 2010.01.11)

“Hakka floral print dancers” from Miaoli was the champion team of 2010 Nerfeti National Belly Dance Competition. In the competition, they wear self-designed Hakka¹⁶⁶ floral print costumes and confidently show the exotic Middle Eastern belly dance. All the team members are either Hakka or wives of Hakka men so they hope to underline Hakka character in their performance.” (CAN News, 2010/12/13)

“In the Gala Show of the 2010 World Belly Dance Competition in Seoul, the Taiwanese team performed belly dance choreographies blended with various Taiwanese cultural elements such as Taiwanese indigenous dance, Hakka dance and Taiwanese folk opera. The president of The Taiwan Dance & Sport Federation said, ‘The creativity of dancers not only diversifies the representation of belly dance but also gives a new life to traditional Taiwanese culture’ ” (CNA News, 2010/05/02).

I think we can interpret the hybrid representation of ‘Middle Eastern dance’ in Taiwan from two perspectives: first, the local culture and environment in Taiwan; and second, the globalization process of belly dance. Previous studies assert that the training backgrounds of Taiwanese belly dance teachers have largely resulted in the prevalence of fusion style as well as the leisure/exercise tendency of its development.¹⁶⁷ However, in addition to the foregoing reason, I think the preference of Taiwanese market and the encouragement of fusion style by specific associations and promoters are also important thrusts to the representation. As many belly dance

¹⁶⁶ Hakka is one of the four major ethnic groups in Taiwan. They are Han Chinese whose ancestors mainly emigrated from the provincial areas of Guangdong, Jiangxi and Fujian in mainland China. They speak Hakka language and have their own culture and characteristics

¹⁶⁷ Most belly dance teachers in Taiwan are transferred from other dance majors thus are lack of training and knowledge on authentic belly dance (Tsai 2009; Lee 2007)

teachers mentioned in the interviews, students in Taiwan expect ‘exercise feeling’ in belly dance class. As for performance, lively and joyous style is well liked by the audience, which has influenced their choreography and the style of teaching to emphasize more on creativity, fun and fitness rather than authenticity.



Figure 3-3 Mei-Hue Lai blending belly dance with traditional Chinese dragon and lion dance
(Photo credit: LT Sports)



Figure 3-4 Hakka floral print used on belly dance costumes
(Photo credit: Miaoli Middle Eastern Belly Dance Association)

During my fieldwork, it was also common to see belly dance teachers bring other elements, from their respective background of dance training, into their belly dance choreographies. Meanwhile, social media such as Youtube and Facebook make long-distance information exchange easier and faster than ever. Watching videos of teachers in other countries posted on social media has become a common way of learning the latest style or fashion from the global belly dance community, which is also a good source of inspiration to their choreography. Furthermore, since the mingling of local cultural elements with belly dance is particularly encouraged by some promoters and associations, it not only reinforces the hybridity but also makes

belly dance in Taiwan has a stronger local taste. For instance, the organizer of the Creative Belly Dance Open Competition in Taichung City states in an interview,

“Belly dance is not only a matter of the Middle East nowadays, it has been popular all around the world and has gradually become a part of Taiwanese culture. Various Taiwanese themes are adopted to create new dance styles in the competition, such as Taiwanese indigenous belly dance, Hakka belly dance, karate belly dance, tribal style belly dance and creative rotating belly dance.” (CNA News, 2010/03/19)

Jie Liu, the chairman of Taiwan Creative Belly Dance Association said in an interview at the First Cultural Industry Exposition, an event including participants from both Taiwan and mainland China,

“A big difference (in terms of belly dance style) between mainland China and Taiwan is that the former focuses more on traditional style and keep more ethnic dance taste; the latter develops novel styles, such as for leisure, fitness, entertainment or performance. Our association has set up branches in five Chinese cities, and we are going to launch the program for training professional Chinese instructors very soon.” (CNA News, 2010.06.19)

To look back the developing history of Taiwanese belly dance, both of the important promoters in the initial stage used to travel to the Middle East to master the dance,¹⁶⁸ and then come back to teach at home. Their classes were the major (almost exclusive) channels for Taiwanese people to acquire the knowledge and skills of the dance at one time. However, the scene has changed, and nowadays numerous belly dance lessons are taught by different instructors all over Taiwan. Besides, diverse ways of learning the dance have been taken up. In addition to taking lessons from Taiwanese instructors, many belly dance practitioners join foreign master workshops

¹⁶⁸ Wan-ru Lee studied in Israel; Eva Shen studied in Egypt

in Taiwan, enroll for certificate training, learn from online videos or take short-term but intensive lessons overseas for pursuing further training.¹⁶⁹

During my study in Japan, I noticed several similarities between the development of belly dance in Taiwan versus hula dance in Japan. Stillman (1999:60) mentioned that the contemporary popularity of hula in Japan dates from the 1980s. Hula courses aimed at housewives were initially offered through community cultural centers as a form of low-impact aerobic exercise (Kurakawa 1996). From this basis, dancers began to follow hula trend in Hawaii through attending hula competitions, as well as through viewing videotaped television broadcasts of those events. Starting in the mid-1980s, younger dancers began to seek out instructors in Hawaii who would accept them as students. The subsequent dissemination of hula in Japan occurred through at least three processes. First, Japanese students travelled to Hawaii for short periods of intensive instruction, including classes and private lessons. Second, Hawaiian instructors were invited by their Japanese students to conduct workshops in Japan. And third, Japanese students brought to their study and teaching of hula the hierarchical institutionalization of the Japanese guide system which is known as *iemoto*.¹⁷⁰ Under this system, many hula troupes in Japan are now viewed as branches of the Hawaiian master instructor's *halau*¹⁷¹ in Hawaii and lower levels of students (i.e., at the beginning or intermediate stages of proficiency) are taught by assistant instructors.

Although belly dance is mostly promoted as a Middle Eastern tradition in Taiwan,

¹⁶⁹ Based on Interview data collected in this study

¹⁷⁰ *Iemoto* (家元) is a Japanese term used to refer to the founder or current Head Master of a certain school of traditional Japanese art. The word *iemoto* is also used to describe a system of familial generations in traditional Japanese arts such as tea ceremony calligraphy, traditional Japanese dance, traditional Japanese music, and martial arts. The *iemoto* system is characterized by a hierarchical structure and the supreme authority of the *iemoto*, who has inherited the secret traditions of the school from the previous *iemoto*.

¹⁷¹ "Privately run schools" in Hawaiian language

the relationship between Taiwanese belly dance and Middle East is not that close as Japanese hula dance and Hawaii. Different from the tradition of *iemoto* system in Japanese hula dance community, the certificate is the dominant training system among Taiwanese belly dance community nowadays. Each of the two most prestigious certificates¹⁷² has a cooperating institute in the Middle East, yet all the instructors of the training courses are Taiwanese, most of them neither have had much training in the Middle East, nor have them been mentored by Middle Eastern teachers for a very long time.

I also noticed in the interviews that most foreign master workshops held in Taiwan are actually not taught by Middle Eastern teachers. Taiwanese belly dance community prefers to invite masters from the United States or from Latin America because their dancing style is better accepted and embraced by Taiwanese students. I think this phenomenon reflects the fundamental discontinuity between belly dance and Middle Eastern culture which resulted primarily from the Western influences, the United States in particular, in the globalizing process of the dance.¹⁷³ In her interview with a dancer Rebecca, who has extensive background in both tribal fusion style belly dance and Hawaiian Hula, Haynes-Clark (2010) asserts that it is the cultural myth of the American melting pot that contributes to this perception of accessibility in belly dance. Because there is neither a clear tradition nor a classical standard of this dance, dancers feel free to integrate other dance styles or cultural elements into belly dance, but this is a delicate process. It may not be appropriate to “borrow” moves from traditions deemed too “cultural” like hula since it is regarded more as a “cultural thing.” But other traditions which have been relegated to the realm of popular

¹⁷² Issued by TDSF and TBDA, as mentioned in Chapter 2

¹⁷³ As mentioned in Chapter 1, many studies have noted that many aspects of modern belly dance are newly invented by the West although the dance is commonly regarded as a Middle Eastern tradition (Haynes-Clark 2010; Tsai 2009; Shay & Sellers-Young 2003). American belly dance community still occupies the leading role of global belly dance fashion.

culture—Bollywood¹⁷⁴ for example—are fair game. Rebecca makes this point in the following exchange with Haynes-Clark:

“Rebecca said, Tribal (fusion) style is a bastardization, it’s an American melting pot. In a nutshell we are borrowing moves from other cultures.” I [Haynes-Clark] asked if she had combined hula with belly dance into a fusion form, and Rebecca replied, “I could have added some Hawaiian, but I was very hesitant because of the culture. Out of respect, if you are learning from a hula master, you don’t want to take this move and do it in your belly dance.”¹⁷⁵

3-5 Competition for health and national pride

During my fieldwork, I encountered several groups of students practicing choreographies for competition. According to Chen (2007), there were eight belly dance competitions held in Taiwan in 2007, an average of one every 1.5 months. To this date, Taiwanese belly dancers have also participated in many international competitions. In Table 3-5 and Table 3-6, I list domestic and international competitions held in 2012 and 2013 which Taiwanese dancers have taken part.¹⁷⁶ In 2013, there were 11 domestic competitions held in Taiwan, and six international competitions held in Asia (three of them in China); in 2012, nine competitions were held in Taiwan, and five international competitions held in Asia (three of them in China).

According to the data collected in interviews with belly dance instructors and organizers of belly dance associations, I found Taiwanese belly dance community are now cooperating closely with its Chinese¹⁷⁷ and Korean counterparts. China, in particular, has been hosting many big scaled international competitions and festivals.

¹⁷⁴ Bollywood is a Hindi film genre replete with music and dancing

¹⁷⁵ Cited from Haynes-Clark (2010:60-61)

¹⁷⁶ I included all the data I collected from fieldwork, interviews and the internet, but it may not include all the competitions that Taiwanese dancers have taken part in during the two years

¹⁷⁷ Including mainland China, Hong Kong and Macau

Some interviewees mentioned that the expenses and time of traveling to China are much lower than going to the Middle East, thus have attracted more dancers from Taiwan and other Asian countries.¹⁷⁸ At the same time, some Taiwanese dancers also teach in China since there is no language barrier; the interaction between Taiwanese and Chinese belly dance communities is getting more intensive.

Table 3-5 Belly dance competitions in 2012

2013	Competition	Organizer	Location	
JAN	The First President Cup Oriental dance Competition (第一屆總統盃東方舞大賽)	TDSF (中華民國國際舞蹈運動總會)	Taipei	
APR	2013 Taiwan Belly Dance Elite Selection (2013 台灣肚皮舞菁英選拔賽)	TWDA (台灣舞蹈家協會)	Changhua	
MAY	7 th National Community university Belly Dance Championship (全國社區大學肚皮舞錦標賽)	TDSF	Taipei	
	Taipei City Youth Cup Campus Oriental Dance Competition (臺北市青年盃校園東方舞錦標賽)	TDSF	Taipei	
	2013 Nerfertiti International Competition (2013 Nerfertiti 盃國際賽)	Bella Belly Dance Studio (沙漠玫瑰肚皮舞教室)	Taipei	
JUN	2013 Global Oriental Dance Artist Competition (2013 全球東方舞藝術家大賽)	ABDF (亞洲肚皮舞總會)	Taipei	
JUL	2013 Asia-Pacific Oriental Dance Competition (2013 亞太東方舞大賽)	ABDF, Vietnam Sadie Bellydance Club	Vietnam	International
	The 4 Taiwan Belly Dance Mama Competition (第四屆台灣肚皮舞媽媽選拔賽)	TWDA	Changhua	
AUG	2013 International Oriental Dance	Water moon dance	Tainan	

¹⁷⁸ Interview with Chen and informal interview with Niu-Lang Tsen, the chairman of TDSF

	Championship (2013 國際東方舞錦標賽)	studio (水月舞坊)		
	Belly Dance Show 2013 (第六屆中華藝術環球肚皮舞大賽)	China Belly Dance Association (中國肚皮舞協會)	Beijing	International
	The 5 th Taiwan Creative Belly Dance Championship (2013 第五屆台灣創意肚皮舞大賽)	TWDA	Taipei	
	2013 WATC The 7 th Beijing International Belly Dance Festival (2013 北京國際肚皮舞節)	Beijing Champion Dance Cultural Communication Ltd (北京冠軍之舞文化傳 播有限公司)	Beijing	International
SEP	Chonchen Cup National Oriental Dance Competition (中正盃全國東方舞競技大賽)	TDSF	Taipei	
OCT	2013 World Belly Dance Competition in Seoul (首爾世界肚皮舞大賽)	The Korean Practical Dance Federation Inc., Korean Belly Dance Association Inc.	Seoul	International
	The 11 th World Cup Competition in China (2013 世界肚皮舞大賽)	China Belly Dance Academy	Beijing	International
NOV	The 9 th Taiwan Belly Dance Open Competition (台灣肚皮舞公開賽)	TDSF	Taipei	
DEC	The 6 th Far East International Belly Dance Competition (第六屆遠東區國際肚皮舞大賽)	ABDF, Amico Studio	Macao	International

Table 3-6 Belly dance competitions in 2012

2012	Competition	Organizer	Location	
APR	The 6 th National Community university Belly Dance Championship (第六屆全國社區大學肚皮舞錦標賽)	TDSF	Taipei	
	2012 Tainan Congressman Cup Belly	TWDA	Tainan	

	Dance Elite Selecting Competition (2012 台南議長盃肚皮舞菁英國手選拔賽)			
MAY	The 2 nd Global Oriental Dance Artist Competition (第二屆全球東方舞藝術家大賽)	ABDF	Taipei	
JUN	The 2 nd Lu-chou district Middle Eastern Belly Dance Competition (第二屆蘆洲區中東肚皮舞觀摩賽)	Lu-chou district committee of physical education (蘆洲區體育會)	Taipei	
JUL	2012 International Oriental Dance Competition –Taiwan audition (2012 國際東方舞大賽—台灣選拔賽)	TWDA	Chiayi	
	2012 WATC The 6 th Beijing International Belly Dance Festival (2012 北京國際肚皮舞節)	Beijing Champion Dance Cultural Communication Ltd	Beijing	International
SEP	The 8 th Taiwan Belly Dance Open Competition (第八屆台灣肚皮舞公開賽)	TDSF	Taipei	
OCT	2012 Nerfertiti International Competition (2012 Nerfertiti 盃國際賽)	Bella Belly Dance Studio	Taipei	
	2012 Chinese Oriental Dance Creation Competition (2012 中華東方舞創作大賽)	TDSF	Taipei	
	The 10 th World Cup Competition in China (2012 世界肚皮舞大賽)	China Belly Dance Academy	Beijing	International
	2013 World Belly Dance Competition in Seoul (首爾世界肚皮舞大賽)	The Korean Practical Dance Federation Inc., Korean Belly Dance Association Inc.	Seoul	International
NOV	The 4 th Taiwan Creative Belly Dance Championship (2012 第四屆台灣創意肚皮舞大賽)	TWDA	Hsinchu	
	Asia-Pacific Creative Belly Dance Inviting Competition	ABDF	Sichuan	International

	(亞太區創意肚皮舞邀請賽)			
DEC	The 5 th Far East International Belly Dance Competition (第五屆遠東區肚皮舞大賽)	ABDF, Amico Studio	Hong Kong	International

Reports about Taiwanese dancers winning big prizes or fusing Taiwanese cultural elements in their performances in international competitions appear frequently in media coverage (Chang 2012a, 2012b; *China Times* 2012.11.19; *China Times* 2013.10.19). Prize winners are even acclaimed as “the pride of Taiwan,” a phrase commonly used in Taiwanese society when somebody wins honor for Taiwan on the international stage.¹⁷⁹ Besides, some media reports state that the victory of belly dancers helps unofficial diplomacy and even work as a soft power of Taiwan fighting for world recognition. Following are a few examples:

“Nancy Kuo’s choreography ‘The Chinese Ghostbuster,’ which merged Chinese Taoist religious dance (八家將) with belly dance moves (Figure 3-5) landed Kuo the bronze medal at the 2007 Nagwa Fouad Cup International Belly Dance Competition held in Seoul. In the following year, she won the 2008 Ahlan Wa Sahlan Belly Dance Festival in Egypt, a competition known as the Olympics of belly dance. Her victory was a big surprise as it constituted the first time ever that a dancer from East Asia had taken the golden medal. She is genuinely **the pride of Taiwan!**” (LT Sports, 2008/07/08)

“In 2009, Nancy Kuo was awarded honorary citizenship by Taoyuan City for her efforts in promoting Taiwan as well as facilitating cultural exchange by inviting belly dancers from various countries to Taiwan for performance and teaching.” (Sina News, 2009/04/02)

Several Taiwanese belly dancers won prizes at the 2010 World Belly Dance Competition in Seoul. The president of TDSF states in an interview with the reporter,

¹⁷⁹ In Taiwan, people who gain international recognition for Taiwan are always hailed as “the pride of Taiwan,” especially athletes. Some examples are the baseball player Chieng-Ming Wang, tennis player Yen-Hsun Lu and golf player Yani Tseng. The term implies a symbolic connection with Taiwanese identity

“We have paid more attention to the cultivation of talented belly dancers in Taiwan recently. When Taiwanese dancers are recognized in international competitions held in Asia, in the United States or in Egypt, it not only contributes to unofficial diplomacy, but also furthers the international recognition of Taiwan.” (CNA News, 2010/05/02)

In July 2010, the stories of 99 Taiwanese citizens were published in a special issue of “New Pride of Taiwan” by an influential Taiwanese magazine titled *Global Views Monthly* (遠見雜誌) (Figure 3-6). Yu-Ting Sun, who won the 2010 World Belly Dance Competition in Seoul, was selected in the category of performing arts (Figure 3-7). The article says:

“Taiwan has long been isolated for political reasons, and the achievements of the “New Pride of Taiwan” have gained international recognition for Taiwan. Beyond their personal achievements, the nurturing support of their homeland also contributed to their success.” For the editors of this special issue, Yu-Ting Sun represents the new Taiwanese spirit.

With the increasing number of Taiwanese belly dancers winning big international prizes, more pictures of dancers with the Taiwanese flag appear in the media coverage (Figure 3-8, 3-9).¹⁸⁰ Nancy Kuo is one, and she expressed her reasons in an interview:

“I brought the Taiwanese flag with me to the stage for the awards ceremony of the 2008 Ahlan Wa Sahlan Belly Dance Festival in Egypt. I felt so proud to let everyone know that I am from Taiwan, from Asia.” (*The Liberty Times*, August 5, 2008)

¹⁸⁰ For the Taiwanese people, showing their national flag in an international occasion has an even bigger and more meaningful issue compared with the people of any other country, since its use is not allowed in the Olympics or other gatherings of nations due to political reasons



Figure 3-5 Nancy Kuo presented her choreography *the Chinese Ghostbuster* with tradition Chinese costume.
(Photo credit: Nancy Kuo)



Figure 3-6 Global Views Monthly 290th—
New 100 Prides of Taiwan



Figure 3-7 “New Pride of Taiwan”—
Yu-Ting Sun



Figure 3-8 Sisters Chen won first place of oriental ensemble category of 2010 Tokyo International Bellydance Competition. Iveta Chen (right) also won the second place of fusion solo category

(Photo credit: Now News: <http://www.nownews.com/2010/09/27/11490-2649958.htm>)



Figure 3-9 Nancy Kuo showed Taiwanese flag when awarded the championship of 2008 Ahlan Wa Sahlan Belly Dance Festival in Egypt

(Photo credit: The Liberty Times <http://www.libertytimes.com.tw/2008/new/aug/29/today-style10.htm>)

Based on my experience of study and dancing in different countries, belly dance competitions are not held as frequently in Japan or the United States as they are in Taiwan.¹⁸¹ Why did competitions become a distinguish feature of the landscape of belly dance in Taiwan? Based on data collected in this study, I assert that teachers' supportive attitudes toward competition may be one of the reasons. As shown in the data collected in interviews and fieldwork observation, most belly dance instructors regard 'join competition' as a great training for students to become more confident of themselves as well as developing a deeper interest in the dance, so many instructors pass competition information to students from time to time, and help with the choreography and practice.

Another important reason, I argue, is that TDSF takes "competition" as a major strategy of promoting belly dance. As shown in the tables above, TDSF serves as the

¹⁸¹ Informal interviews with belly dance instructors in Japan and the United States

organizer of many competitions in Taiwan. TDSF is a non-profit association certified and guided by the government, and they give the government's policy as the essence of their founding purpose.¹⁸² During my visit to the office of TDSF in August 2011, the chairperson of TDSF told me: "Getting government sponsorship to promote belly dance is exceptional in Asia, and even exceptional in the world!"

The federation promotes belly dance as a healthy exercise; they believe hosting domestic belly dance competitions helps to increase the participants of this healthy dance, a response to the government's long term policies on health and sports –the propagation of "Sports for All." The federation also encourages dancers to create "Taiwanese style belly dance" and supports elite dancers to attend international competitions, which corresponds to the government's advocacy of "Culture diplomacy."¹⁸³ Thus I argue, while TDSF actively organize competitions, and many belly dance instructors zealously support their students to join, they both play important roles in making "competitions all the year" a local feature of Taiwanese belly dance.

3-6 Discussion

Belly dance was introduced to Taiwan in 2002, primarily marketed as a "body slimming exercise." Through analyzing numerous media reports devoted to belly dance published from 2002 to 2012, fieldwork in 10 institutes providing belly dance classes, and interviews with more than 20 experienced belly dancers and organizers of

¹⁸² As stated in the "Founding purpose of TDSF" on its official website <http://www.bellydance.org.tw/>, accessed August 22nd, 2013

¹⁸³ It is part of a strategy promoted by President Ying-Jeou Ma, who says that Taiwan must increase its so-called "soft power" if it is to stand on the international stage. The strategy is wide-ranging. It includes developing globally famous brands, boosting Taiwan's presence not only in the high-tech sector but also in arts, food and fashion, and marketing great things about Taiwan. As a result, the government has poured millions of dollars into supporting performance troupes, filmmakers and even pop singers (BBC News Asia-Pacific, 2010.10.24).

related associations, this study confirms that most knowledge about belly dance in Taiwan is inspired by the global belly dance community in which the United States occupies the leading role. At the same time, some local features of Taiwanese belly dance have emerged through its rapid development in the past ten years.

In response to the first purpose of this dissertation, I argue there are five features of the present development of belly dance in Taiwan: 1. Numerous community based belly dance classes and performances 2. Mature women as major participants 3. An emphasis on the effects for body-beauty and femininity enhancing 4. A hybrid representation of the Middle East 5. Competition for health and national pride. In contrast with previous studies about Taiwanese belly dance, which generally regard “the development of belly dance in Taiwan” as a popular phenomenon, this study aims to give a deeper interpretation of this phenomenon by including the social and cultural background into the analysis.

The appreciation of body shape is not a tradition of Chinese culture, neither the display of sexiness/feminine charm was regarded as a criterion to judge the womanhood or the quality of being an ideal woman. However, soon after the lifting of Martial Law in 1987, an image of beautiful and sexy modern women was created by the body-beauty industry as the new ideal, which marks an important switch in women’s image in Taiwan. Various kinds of commercial advertisements continuously persuade women into consuming all kinds of goods, disciplining their bodies, and altering their appearance in order to live up to the new image of ideal women presented by the media (Clarke and Griffin 2007; Wolf 1991). Influenced by the social atmosphere, women’s leisure exercise mostly intertwined with notions of body slimming, health and sexiness on Taiwanese media since the 1990s. A similar notion can be found in the government’s promotion on the “Women Slimming Exercise Plan,”

which has been launched all over the island since 2010 (Hsieh and Hsu 2012).

Since belly dance was imported to Taiwan, it has been mainly promoted for its benefits of body-slimming, as well as for making women feel more sexy, feminine and confident. Based on this study, I argue, the Taiwanese belly dance community holds the belief that confidence can be improved by altering outward appearance (body shape, makeup, outfits) and by displaying sexiness/femininity, and it encourages the notion that such self-improvement leads to self-appreciation and improved mental health. The therapeutic benefits of belly dance interpreted in Taiwan correspond to the prevalent media discourse of women's empowerment through external changes, rather than empowerment through changing one's inner body image, through connecting with ancient goddesses or by challenging patriarchal oppression, which are more commonly promoted by its American counterparts. Besides, I found the traditional Chinese body philosophy that "nourishing life through strengthening the body's vital energy" (Kleinman 2011; Jette and Vertinsky 2011) is commonly held by belly dance practitioners. Most of them presume that belly dancing is good to both their body and mind, since they identify the dance mainly as an exercise rather than as an art form.

In contrast with Egypt or some Western countries where belly dance shows usually occur in nightclubs or ethnic restaurants in big cities targeting foreign tourists, most belly dance performances in Taiwan actually are held as local events. This study found the cooperation between belly dance instructors and the dominant adult education system—community university— played a crucial role in the expansion of the dance. Besides, while belly dance shows in clubs or restaurants in other countries are generally performed by professional dancers, shows in local Taiwanese events are mostly performed by amateur dancers who are members of community belly dance

clubs or nearby dance studios. These amateur dancers see performing as a way of giving support to those local events with poor budgets, through which they also get a stronger sense of being a part of their community. This study also notes that reports about commercial belly dance shows have been increasing in recent years; however, the amount of reports remains relatively small. Further studies will be necessary to keep track of the future development of this trend.

Focusing on the phenomenon of culture drift among modern ethnic sports, Sogawa (2006:101) proposes that when an ethnic sport becomes an international sport, native culture, which had been inseparable from the sport, tends to be washed off which he calls *culture laundering*. With respect to the global fluidity of culture in the modern era, Appadurai (1996) proposes that migration and media together help de-territorialize cultural boundaries. It's also been noted through much scholarship that there is a hybrid orientation in the present performances of ethnic dances (Shay 2008; Meduri 2008; Potuoğlu-Cook 2006; Osumare 2002; Foley 2001).

In Taiwan, the fusion with other dances or cultural elements is commonly seen in belly dancing choreographies and costumes although the dance is primarily promoted as a Middle Eastern tradition. Previous studies assert that the training background of Taiwanese belly dance instructors¹⁸⁴ has largely contributed to the prevalence of fusion style and the leisure/exercise tendency of its development. This study finds people who do belly dance in Taiwan are generally attracted by its benefits as a body-slimming exercise and the sense of exoticism, rather than identifying themselves with Middle Eastern culture.

Data also show that, being inspired by the government's diplomatic policies, dancers are encouraged to integrate Taiwanese cultural elements into their

¹⁸⁴ Most belly dance teachers in Taiwan are transferred from other dance majors thus are lack of training and knowledge on authentic belly dance (Tsai 2009; Lee 2007).

performance when competing in international competitions, since it is thought of as a chance for Taiwan to receive worldwide recognition. This study argues that the marketing strategies adopted by the pioneering promoters of belly dance and the governmental policies have played important roles in shaping the cultural landscape of Taiwanese belly dance. While nationalism and consumerism have contributed to the diverse and hybrid representation of this Middle Eastern dance in Taiwan, its connection with the Middle East is even more tenuous. Furthermore, the case in Taiwan also reflects the fundamental discontinuity between the representation of belly dance and Middle Eastern culture, which is formed in the course of the globalization process of the dance.

Belly dance has been taught extensively in Community universities since it was introduced to Taiwan. Community university is a well-known adult education system where mature women comprise the majority of students. Radical feminist ideas and ancient Goddess myths are rarely associated with belly dance in Taiwan. For most interviewees, their motivation to belly dancing is for exercise, body slimming or relaxation. The prosperity of the mass media and beauty industry brought about the “body-beauty” boom in Taiwan since the 1990s, which contributed to the “leisure exercise for body slimming” trend of Taiwanese women leisure exercise (女性休閒運動瘦身化). Belly dancing is claimed to be a low-impact exercise that offers enough “exercise results” that most participants desire. Moreover, speed, explosive force and male partners are not required, which open up the opportunity for mature or married women to join.

For many participants, the sisterhood and friendship forged with other women in belly dance classes are important thrusts for them to continue belly dancing as well as to perform it. Many people think they have become more feminine after learning belly

dance, to be more precisely, I argue it is the “feminine-encouraging” culture of the community that has led to many women’s self-feminization, self-appreciation and the enhancement of their confidence. For its prosperity in Taiwan, I argue, the dance is successfully marketed as a great dance/exercise for pursuing the traits of modern beauty: nice body contour, health and sexiness; an easy and all-in-one approach to attaining the ideal woman image constructed by Taiwanese media which has prevailed in Taiwanese society in the past two decades.

Chapter 4 Belly dance and gender role

Displaying feminine charm is a distinguishing feature of belly dance performances, however, the femininity/sexiness of belly dance may be perceived negatively by people outside of the community. Many western studies have discussed the discrepancy of interpretations when the dance happens in private versus public venue, and between dancer and audience (Haynes-Clark 2010; Kraus 2009; Jarmakani 2006). Mass media and tourist industries have been continuously reconstructed and reinforced the image of belly dance to be extremely feminine, which has also left the dance a stigma of mesmeric, immoral and frivolous (Kraus 2010b; Keft-Kennedy 2005; Helland 2001; Deaver 1978). Traditional Taiwanese culture basically discourages women, married and older women in particular, from displaying sexiness/femininity in public, which inspired me to explore if the “feminine feature” of the dance has also hindered women from belly dancing.

4-1 Different interpretation of femininity/sexiness

Besides its feminine nature in movements, another big difference between belly dance and other leisure dance/exercise is, it is a “performable exercise.” As mentioned aforehand,¹⁸⁵ it is easy to find belly dance performances in various activities in Taiwan today. While gorgeous two-piece costumes, the exotic flair and feminine dance movements have attracted lots of women to belly dance classes, how will this femininity/sexiness be interpreted when it goes out of classroom and is scrutinized by strangers’ gazes?

¹⁸⁵ Chapter 3-1

4-1-1 Misimpressions influenced by old traditions and customs

Belly dance was barely known in Taiwan before 2002. When the dance initially came to Taiwan, some people just perceived it as another kind of “sexy shows” that have a long history in Taiwanese society.¹⁸⁶ Sofia explained her parents’ attitude toward her involvement in belly dancing:

“The social status of belly dancers in Egypt is very low, but we don’t have that problem, here, they just feel your costume is revealing (穿著清涼), so some of them perceive it as sultry dances like those being performed in construction-site shows (工地秀).

Some of those stereotypes are still prevalent, especially among the older generation. Taking my parents for example, they knew for some time that I’ve been learning belly dance but they didn’t tell anyone; they felt a little embarrassed, I guess. There is no problem (belly dancing) for exercise, but performance....

Later, after I got awards in some competitions, they started to encourage me to dance for other relatives, but I didn’t like the way they addressed me, such as “Show us your belly!”(露一下肚皮嘛) “Make a shake!”(搖一下阿).....feels very much like a construction-site show; it made me feel my dance is very cheap, just for entertaining others. Many people in Taiwan still view belly dance in this way. Ok, maybe it’s because we show more skin, but I don’t think it is that revealing actually. There are many show girls and young jazz dancers who wear sexier clothes and show even more skin!”

¹⁸⁶There are several kinds of sexy shows in Taiwanese tradition. One typical case are the so-called “amusing-car” “ladies, who wear revealing costumes and perform at local shrines when there is a festival or a special event going on. These performances are considered as a kind of offering to the local deities. Construction-site shows (工地秀) are another typical case. The real estate market in Taiwan reached a peak in 1980s and 1990s. At the time, the builders usually hired sexy singers, dancers or strippers to perform at their construction site. The main purpose was to attract more potential customers to the site. Although these sexy shows are not common in urban Taiwan anymore, the image of dancing girls wearing revealing costumes performing on the stage still stays in older Taiwanese minds, which more or less resulted in the negative perception of belly dance.

Chen shared his opinion on people's attitude toward belly dance based on his nine-year experience of teaching the dance,

“In general, Taiwanese people are more open to belly dance compared to several years before. However, people from rural areas, especially the elderly, don't see the difference between belly dance and erotica (色情). Many “amusing-car” performers wear belly dance costumes even though they don't do belly dance, which gives the public with a negative image (次級文化) of belly dance. It happens more often in the rural areas; the situation should be better in the cities.

Frankly speaking, most men who go to belly dance performances view belly dancers with ‘pornographic eyes,’ they don't go there to appreciate the dance skills. Nowadays, belly dancers are invited to perform in various kinds of events, but more or less, people regard it as a ‘sexy show,’ maybe not erotica but just feel like a ‘sexy show.’ For example, if President Ma attends an event with belly dance performance in the back, dare he turn to the back and watch? Definitely not! The media is going to have a lot to write, say, he is peeking at the dancers' breasts or something like that, that's why it's not easy to improve the image/class of belly dance.”

Liron hopes to change people's negative impression of belly dance by emphasizing the artistic quality in her choreography and performances:

Taiwan people knew little about belly dance when it was initially promoted, some people even thought it to be another kind of belly dance, the kind featuring a guy who draws a face on his big belly smoking a cigarette with his belly button (laughs). Later, it was perceived as revealing or erotic because of the costume. Some people change their impression after seeing a performance in person; they found it different from what they imagined.

We really want to make belly dance an art form, but still, there are teachers performing and teaching belly dance with more of an erotic angle (艷舞) so the image of belly dance fluctuates all the time. Our reaction is to do more

performances, to let the public see the different style (artistic) and change their negative image of belly dance.”

Aisha is a local of Kaohsiung, the biggest city in southern Taiwan. She shared the late development of belly dance in Kaohsiung compared to Taipei:

“At first, I saw a belly dance performance on TV and wanted to learn, but I had difficulty finding a belly dance class in Kaohsiung at the time (2005-2006), even though the dance was already quite popular in Taipei. It took one year until I finally found a class. My teacher is from a belly dance troupe in Taipei, she used to commute between the two cities every week.

The first time when my teacher and I went to the center of a Community university with the hope to open a belly dance class, their response is still vivid in my memory, the person in charge said: ‘Belly dance? Come on teachers, we Kaohsiung people are very simple (民風純樸).’ I have to say, the development of belly dance here was two or three years behind Taipei in the beginning; people had no idea what belly dance was, only a vague (and usually negative) impression. However, the gap has narrowed down, thanks to the mass media. The number of people acknowledging belly dance as an exercise or an art form has largely increased here.”

Eva, who started learning belly dance when the dance was just introduced to Taiwan, shared people’s reactions on her involvement in belly dance,

“In the beginning, many friends were shocked and asked “It’s very revealing isn’t it?” But, after two or three years, belly dance became common and popular so the impression of belly dance has become more normal. Nowadays, there are many girls learning American cabaret dance (美式艷舞); belly dance is very normal by contrast.”

In the interviews, I found people do have negative impressions of belly dance, which

are rarely addressed in previous studies and in the Taiwanese media. Although more people have got to know what belly dance is, and perceive it in a more positive way, the negative impression still exists, and it is particularly prevalent in older generations and in rural areas.¹⁸⁷

4-1-2 Critiques, concerns and opposition from the family

One day in August 2012, I went to a studio located in Taichung city¹⁸⁸ to do participant observation. I arrived early than expected, so I easily settled myself on the classroom floor, stretching and waiting. One after another, students of this advanced class arrived, some of them gathered together practicing the new choreography for the competition which was coming in the next month. Right before the class began, I was intrigued by a conversation between the teacher and some students,

“We have to change the formation in our choreography, we missed May, she can’t join the competition anymore because of the opposition from her family.” the teacher announced.

“Will she still come to class or practice?” a student asked.

“I’m not sure, she said she needs to wait and see” the teacher replied.

I’m a student, and single, and I have never confronted any obstacle to belly dance. This episode vividly reminds me that the life experience of married women may be greatly influenced or even constrained by her family. Previous studies pointed out that marriage and family are influential in women’s leisure participation (Tsai 2008; Hsieh 2003; Firestone and Shelton 1994; Deem 1986), so I asked every interviewee about the attitude of their families and acquaintances toward their

¹⁸⁷ As the interview data shown above, teachers from central Taiwan (Chen and Liron) have heard students being prevented by their families from practicing belly dancing; two teachers (Eva and Sofie) from Taipei city never heard of students with this problem.

¹⁸⁸ The biggest city in central Taiwan

involvement in belly dance. Besides, I'm aware that I am not able to reach those who are strongly opposed by family to belly dancing since they will not show up at the classrooms. As an alternative, I asked interviewees to share if they have heard or seen any case like that. I hope to explore the perception of femininity in belly dance from the viewpoint of dancers' family, especially the negative aspect, since it has been largely neglected in previous studies. Liron shared some cases of her own students,

“Some people oppose their female family members doing belly dance. Actually it's not just opposition to belly dancing, they just don't want you to go out. Our society, still, is kind of conservative. Male chauvinism still exists, many men think “Why does my wife have to dance in front of others?”

Some men don't allow their wives to learn dance even though their wives pay for the class by themselves, there are lots of limitations. Usually the opposition of family comes from the husband or mother-in-law, the reason we usually hear from mother-in-law is something like “Others will gossip if my daughter in-law does this (belly dance).”

Lucy described the experience of her old classmates:

“Some of my classmates received critiques for doing belly dancing, those negative gossip usually came from non-significant others (閒雜人等). For example, “Ask your wife to stop belly dancing, expose her belly and expose her thigh, what a disgrace (丟人現眼)!” Or, some people see you dance well and look beautiful, but they are reluctant to give compliments, just criticize like “Your costume are revealing, that's why you get attention.” In the beginning, some students gave up because they could not balance themselves.”

Chen is an experienced dance instructor who regularly teaches belly dance and street dance in the CYC Social Education Center¹⁸⁹ in central Taiwan, and he explained the

¹⁸⁹ One of the adult education systems with a long history in Taiwan

situation in his class:

“Several mothers in my class have told me not to let their husbands and family know that they are here for belly dancing; probably they told their family they do yoga or aerobics here. Therefore, they don’t buy belly dance costumes in case their family finds out. More or less, a husband feels uncomfortable when his wife wears revealing clothing...

Based on my observation, 70 percent of my students might have communicated with their husband before joining the class; the rest of them don’t let their family know what they really do here. Those who are strongly confined by their family should not be included (because they won’t show up in the class), of course I mean married women, single women don’t have the problem.”

Based on the above cases, we can see married women have more concerns, and confront more obstacles when taking part in belly dancing. In the previous section, Sofia mentioned her parents’ embarrassment for her involvement in belly dancing performances while her husband takes a totally supportive attitude. Similar pattern can be found in my other interviews. Several interviewees are supported or even encouraged by their husbands in belly dancing, but in order to avoid unnecessary troubles, they chose to hide it (belly dancing) from their relatives of older generation. Lucy is one of the examples,

“As you know, my husband 100 percent supports me in belly dancing, for my other relatives, most of them have no idea what I am doing. I think my in-laws know that I am learning belly dance but they don’t know I teach and perform. Ah no worries, my husband helps well to cover for me (laughs).

I got my first teaching (belly dance) position several days after my grandpa passed away, so I told him (in my mind) during his memorial service, I said, “I’m very happy now, this dance truly makes me happy, please be relieved and go with ease.” For my dad, I didn’t tell him until he was about to pass away, he couldn’t

stop laughing and saying “Hahahahaha, you?! Belly dance?!”

After hearing her story, I further inquired “Did you intentionally keep it back from your older relatives?” She confirmed:

“Yes, I know what’s in normal people’s minds (about belly dance) so I don’t like to talk much about it (doing/teaching belly dance).... The older generation in particular, there is no need to make them concerned or misunderstand. I wouldn’t care about people’s nonsensical gossips if I were doing in that way (erotic style belly dance), but I’m not! I’m so tired of explaining, I don’t want to clarify anymore.”

There are also cases when the family at first opposed to belly dancing but gradually changed their attitude to be supportive. One summer morning in 2012, I went to a dance studio in New Taipei city for fieldwork, I was chatting with a couple of mama students during the class break, and I was curious about their family’s attitudes toward their involvement in belly dance:

Me: Does your family support you belly dancing?

Mido: Yes, they are supportive!

Me: Were they supportive in the beginning?

Blanca: My family didn’t say anything good or bad, it depends on your family...

Meg: Those (whose family is strongly against their participation in belly dance) wouldn’t be here from the beginning!

Mido: **My family didn’t understand** at first.....they thought the dance costume was revealing, and they also worried there might be other guys in our classroom so that I would be looked at impolitely, now they understand our environment (classroom and community) is simple, and that the dance is very healthy, very beautiful, not dirty at all (laughs)

Me: What changed their attitude?

Blanca: After learning the dance, I don’t get angry at my sons and my husband frequently, they say I have become more tender and happier (laughs)

Mido: My family didn’t like when I was learning belly dance in the very beginning,

but they gradually altered their attitude because they noticed my change. I don't get into a dead end (鑽牛角尖) so often as before, they find I have become happier after learning belly dance as regular exercise. Two years have passed, now my family not only supports me, they also encourage my daughter to learn together. Sometimes she takes class here (studio); sometimes we practice together at home, when we have performances or competitions, my husband comes to be our audience, belly dance has become our family activity (laughs)!

Similar to the experience of Mido, many interviewees think the reason why people perceive belly dance in a negative way is that "they don't understand." Because of their lack of understanding, they tend to be intrigued by the sexy image of the dance and simply connect belly dance with those sexy shows, which a good woman would never get involved in. Then, what are the things people "failed to understand" about belly dance?

As many Western studies have noted, feminist ideology and ancient Goddess myths are frequently adopted by dancers and some scholars to "sanitize" the sexy and erotic appearance of the dance (Kraus 2009; Karayanni 2009; Maira 2008; Shay and Sellers-Young 1993). However, I noticed that feminist ideas are rarely connected with belly dance in Taiwan. Besides, most interviewees are not familiar with the story bridging belly dance and Goddess myth. Since, as we see in the previous section, belly dance is sometimes given a negative label, how then do Taiwanese women defend or explain their involvement in belly dance? And what is the ideal feminine image and ideology with which these women identify: body liberation, resistance to patriarchy, challenging mainstream body images, or something else? I am going to discuss some collective ideas shared by these women in the next section.

4-2 Distinct from bad others

The appreciation of body shape is not a tradition of Chinese culture, neither the display of sexiness/feminine charm was regarded as a criterion to judge the womanhood or the quality of being an ideal woman. In particular, for women who were married or who have children, paying too much attention on her appearance might be criticized as selfish since they were expected to pay more attention on their children and husband, always putting their family before them even at the expense of their own happiness (Tsai 2008; Tamney and Chiang 2002). To display feminine charm or sexiness outside of household might be criticized as trying to attract attention from others which is not something a virtuous wife should ever do.

However, since the 1990s new interpretations of these “bad women features” have been created by the mass media, the beauty industry as well as fitness and health institutions.¹⁹⁰ Attractive appearance, nice body contour and feminine charm/sexiness have been promoted as the “must-have” or “desirable goals” of modern women. Those who don’t make effort to maintain or improve their appearance may even subject to moral condemnation as being lazy or irresponsible to themselves.

Although a new ideal feminine image has been created, some traditional values are still embraced by many East Asian women. Yang (2007:365) argues that nowadays the image of the ideal modern women, as created by the Taiwanese media, is both beautiful and family-loving, rather than men haters or radical resisters to the traditional family structure. When people question the reputation of belly dance, I found most belly dance participants draw a line between the “bad others” (dancing girls, social butterflies, play girls, material girls and artificial beauties) and themselves to “sanitize” their involvement in belly dancing. I classify their narratives of defense

¹⁹⁰ See Chapter1-1

into four categories: 1. Only for exercise, not performance; 2. Selecting performances, not dance for living; 3. Unisexual community; 4. Natural and frugal.

4-2-1 Only for exercise, no performance

As mentioned in the previous section, almost all the critiques of belly dance focus on its practice as a performance, rather than as an exercise. Some people regard the once-a-week belly dance class as pure exercise, just like jogging or aerobics, a period of time stepping away from family and work for entirely relaxation. They never take part in performance since it goes against their motivation; they don't want to spend extra time and energy for preparing which may make them even more exhausted. Grace told me why she doesn't want to perform:

“I'm really bad at memorizing choreography, thus every week, our teacher has to review what we have learned last time, because most of us (students in the class) don't remember well (laughs). Our teacher never gets angry, she knows we are here just for exercise and relaxation. It's impossible for me to perform, that will make me super stressed. I have enough at work and at home; there is no need to pay to torture myself.”

In Taiwan, it is still rare to hear that somebody's initial motivation to learn belly dance is to perform. Some people see belly dance performance interesting and feel like to learn and perform, but it usually associates with other motivations like exercise, body slimming and etc. Some people start to do group performance with other classmates after learning for a while. The friendship and sisterhood bonded with classmates is very important for many participants to continuing the dance and try to perform. However, performing in public is very different from dancing/performing in the classroom, especially when the audience is composed solely of familiar classmates of the same sex. Sun shares her reason for not performing anymore,

“I performed in public with my class once and that’s the only time. I told my teacher I am not going to perform anymore! I don’t like to be watched that way, the **gaze from male audience** made me uncomfortable. I still go to belly dance class every week, that’s almost the only exercise I do. I enjoy dancing for myself and dancing together with my female classmates; I don’t dance for those I don’t know.”

4-2-2 Selecting performances, not dance for living (vs. dancing girl)

In Taiwan, most belly dance students have “performance” experience. However, those who do commercial belly dance performances or regularly taking part in competitions constitute a slender proportion of belly dance participants.¹⁹¹ For the majority, their performing experience comes from dancing together with their dance classmates in routine achievement shows (成果展) held by their dance studios or Community universities. Many community-based belly dance classes or groups frequently perform in their community activities. However, most of these performances are voluntary-oriented, and very possibly the cost of costumes and transportation is on the dancers themselves. Although there is a reward for commercial performance and competition winners, it is not enough for making living so there are few people only teaching or performing belly dance as a full-time job in Taiwan.

Dancing girls (舞女) in Taiwanese tradition, are perceived as women who make money by dancing, entertaining and pleasing men in red-light districts. They usually have sexy appearances, wearing heavy perfume and makeup, giving full play to their feminine charm in front of every male, which are almost opposite from the traditional good women ideal. To distinguish themselves from dancing girls, many interviewees emphasize their awareness of different attributes of performance invitations since they don’t dance just for making money. As Aisha shared,

¹⁹¹ See Chapter 3-1

“In my troupe, we are very careful about **performance selection**. We know what most people think about belly dance performance, and we can’t control the attitudes of audience. We decline some invitations when they don’t look so decent, money is not the big reason for our dancing, we do many volunteer performances, **we don’t live by performing belly dance.**”

Aisha also mentioned that their troupe had had bad experiences in past performances when the MCs used frivolous words to introduce them.¹⁹² In preventing the uncomfortable situation from happening again, they try to check out the draft of the MC’s introduction speech before the performance, or directly appoint their own troupe member to be their introducer.

Sofia’s troupe is usually invited to perform at various occasions, such as the year-end banquet of companies (尾牙), spring banquets (春酒), ceremonies, political campaigns and construction-site shows (工地秀). Sofia mentioned,

“We really don’t like to perform in construction-site shows because those audiences tend to see belly dance as a sultry, low-class dance. We don’t like it, and we try to avoid (these shows).”

4-2-3 Unisexual environment (vs. social butterfly/play girl)

Some people might wonder if those women who belly dance are more like “social butterflies” who enjoy flirting with men. Displaying sexiness and uncovering body parts in public, does it enhance heterosexual attractiveness and the opportunities to associate with men? Based on the data collected in this study, the answer is no.

Almost every interviewee emphasized that the belly dance community is very simple because belly dance classes are usually all-women. Although there are always males in the audience when they go out to do performances, women who do belly

¹⁹² Such as “Let’s have something flashy and exciting!”(清涼一下)

dance performance usually show up and leave as a group,¹⁹³ thus it is rare to have individual contact with the dancers. Ballroom dance is mentioned by many interviewees as a counterexample since it usually requires a heterosexual dance partner and a lot of body contacts, which is thought by many Taiwanese people to be more “serious” than exposing one’s belly in public.¹⁹⁴ Examining Taiwanese women’s experience of belly dancing, I argue that self-realization (自我實現) and sisterhood play a much more important role than the eagerness for heterosexual association or attractiveness. In belly dance community, most of the time women dance and play with other women (or with herself), actually some of them chose to do belly dance for the reason that there is no need for male dance partners.

Therefore, although belly dance costumes are generally more revealing, it does not mean these women are “play girls” who enjoy seducing men. Neither are they radical feminists who propagate the Western ideology of body/sex liberation to rebel against patriarchal oppression.¹⁹⁵ Through the interview excerpts below, we can see that belly dance participants have not abandoned norms of traditional goodness, chastity and loyalty to one’s partner that are still highly valued by most women, though their adherence to these norms may be inconspicuous.

“Belly dancing is a good exercise for me. I love it and I have made many friends here. We are all women, our dancing community is very simple. It’s very different from social dance, so many troubles and affairs happen between dance partners if they are not couples.” (Green)

“If you are married, very possibly you care about your husband’s feelings. In my case, I like Salsa dance and Ballroom dance very much, but they require a male dance partner, the only partner I can ask is my husband because I am not

¹⁹³ In Taiwan, belly dance is primarily displayed as a group dance

¹⁹⁴ This concept is especially prominent among women who are married, see the interview cited below

¹⁹⁵ I noticed that strong feminist wording is not commonly used in Taiwan when practitioners and the media describe empowerment through belly dancing

willing to dance with other males, or my husband may feel uncomfortable if I dance with other men. For people like me, belly dance would be a better choice, some of my students came to belly dance exactly for the same reason.” (Sofia)

“So, compared to dancing with males, uncovering your belly doesn’t seem like a big issue?” I asked.

“No, uncovering your belly doesn’t really matter.” (Sofia)

“I joined a ballroom dance club in my undergrad years, but I quit later because my husband (boyfriend at the time) was unhappy that I danced with male classmates. Belly dance is different, you can even dance by yourself. Besides, I don’t accept male students in my class because it’s hard to tell their intentions. I want to have a “women only” environment.” (Lucy)

“Many people make good friends in belly dance community which is almost impossible for people who do Ballroom dance. They always have male-female pairs and it might end up with troubles (affairs) if they are not couples.” (Lotus)

“Belly dance is something you can dance by yourself. For Ballroom dance, it’s better to have a male partner as the leader which makes the dance better. Although it is common to see a woman dance with a female partner in the class,¹⁹⁶ frankly speaking, most women wish to dance with a male partner. However, few husbands can accept this.... Of course there are some husbands who love to dance very much, but that’s quite rare. The image of Ballroom dance is also controversial.” (Liron)

4-2-4 Natural and frugal (vs. artificial beauty & material girl)

Since the late 1980s, media has become more influential in Taiwanese people’s daily lives. The beauty industry invests lots of money in all kinds of commercial advertisements, continuously persuading women into consuming all kinds of goods

¹⁹⁶ In general, there are fewer males students in ballroom dance classes in Taiwan

(clothing, shoes, name brand, cosmetics, and etc.), disciplining their bodies (exercise, workout) and altering their appearance (cosmetic surgery) to get closer to the ideal women images presented by the media. After 1990, the antenna of Western media stretches to Taiwan as well as other parts of East Asia (Chang and Song 2010; Johansson 2001:95), a beautiful and sexy modern women image has been created as the new ideal (Shaw 2012; Yang 2007; 2011; Tsai 2009). Women who scrupulously abide by traditional virtues like “frugality” (reluctant to spend any money on herself) and “devote everything to the family” (don’t care about appearance and body shape after getting married or having a baby) might be seen as old fashioned, which usually means being depicted as an “*obasan*,”¹⁹⁷ the abject other constructed by Taiwanese media in order to contrast with the new ideal women type “*shou-nyu*.”¹⁹⁸

As previous studies and news reports claim, most Taiwanese mature women do belly dance for exercise, body slimming and health. To probe into this phenomenon, I argue it can be interpreted as the endeavors of women who try to get rid of “*obasan* figure” and “non-feminine *obasan* temperament,” so as to approach the new ideal women image. In news articles related to belly dance and data collected in my interviews, it is common to find people saying they become happier and more confident after learning belly dance because it helps to improve their appearances.¹⁹⁹ Although enjoying the pleasure gained from their appearance changes, they try to be distinct from the “modern bad others”— material girls and artificial beauties—by

¹⁹⁷ The popular description of the middle-aged and unsophisticated auntie in Taiwan; the word was originally from Japanese language

¹⁹⁸ Mature modern and independent women. The popularity of HBO’s *Sex and the City* in the early 21st century ignited a new cultural phenomenon in Taiwan, with its fans, called “*Shou-nyu*”, occupying the ‘space of attention’ in the local public sphere and capturing women’s imagination and aspiration for a cosmopolitan lifestyle. Presenting ‘unlimited pink business opportunities’, the term ‘*Shou-nyu*’ soon proliferated into the domains of the popular print and broadcast media, with local television and film adaptations as well as related literature in women’s magazines and bestselling books, such as *Be a Shou-nyu, Not an Obasan* (Yang, 2011:235-236).

¹⁹⁹ Those usually mentioned include toned skin and body, slimmer, better complexion, wearing makeup, wearing beautiful practice outfit or performing costumes

declaring that they still embrace traditional virtues like frugality and the appreciation of natural beauty. We can see this idea in the interview with Lucy,

“Many belly dance movements are useful for figure shaping, like figure eight for your waist curve and shimmy for your thighs. Women are really strange creatures, although we say there is no need to care too much about people’s judgments, we still live under the gazes of others. If you can improve your shape without taking medicine, without starving yourself, without liposuction surgery, and see people praising you through their gaze, why not?! Why not?!!!

Besides, you don’t need to spend much money, A Clinic charges you thousands of dollars for their body-slimming program, we don’t need to do that, our approach is natural, economical and much healthier.”

Compared to those “material girls” who spend extravagantly on brand names, premium cosmetics and skincare products to make them look modern and pretty, belly dance participants explain the amount of money they invested for belly dance class registration and costumes is truly slim. Furthermore, they morally win over “artificial beauties” by adopting a natural and healthy approach (dance/exercise), exerting themselves to become prettier and more feminine through practice, rather than lazily relying on interventions from the outside—i.e. cosmetic surgeons, botox, silicone and liposuction.

4-3 Discussion

Studies have shown that although a new ideal feminine image has been created, some traditional values or familial norms still largely influence women in Taiwan as well as in other Asian societies such as Korea, Hong Kong, China and Japan (Tamney and Chiang 2002:150; Chang and Song 2010:558-559; Stevi, Liu and Woo 2008:8-9). Johansson (2001:95) examines how images of women in two official Chinese

women's magazines reveal a shared effort by the beauty industry and the Communist leadership to construct a 'modern Chinese women' where modern means investment in beauty and 'Chinese' entails an essentialized idea of an Oriental femininity. This feminine ideal is constructed against its 'Other,' the stereotype of the individualistic and hedonistic Western women. Studies also pointed out that nowadays the dominant discourse of an ideal good woman, as created by the Taiwanese media, is a hybrid of modern and tradition, both beautiful and family-loving (Yang 2011:365; Shaw 2012:88).

Displaying feminine charm is a distinguishing feature of belly dance performances. While gorgeous two-piece costumes, the exotic flair and feminine dance movements have attracted lots of women to belly dance classes, how will this femininity/sexiness be interpreted when it goes out of the "female only" classroom and is scrutinized by the gaze of male strangers? Many Western studies have noted that feminist ideology and ancient Goddess myths are frequently adopted by dancers and some scholars to "sanitize" the dance's sexy and erotic appearance (Keft-Kennrdy 2010; Karayanni 2009; Shay and Sellers-Young 2003). However, I noticed that feminist ideas are rarely connected with belly dance in Taiwan. Furthermore, most interviewees are not familiar with the story bridging belly dance and goddess myth. Then how do Taiwanese women defend or explain their involvement in belly dance? The second purpose of this dissertation is to identify the connection between the popularity of belly dance, women's gender practice, and womanhood in present Taiwanese society.

When people question the reputation of belly dance, I found most belly dance participants draw a line between the "bad others" —i.e. dancing girls, social butterflies, material girls, and artificial beauties—and themselves to defend their

involvement in belly dance. Moreover, most interviewees flexibly coordinate the traditional and the modern, taking their ideal women image as one that combines the modern notion of beauty with the traditional notion of goodness. Asserting that their motivation to belly dance is for exercise or leisure activity (rather than for money or pleasing men), a frugal and natural approach to acquire femininity and beauty, interviewees differentiate themselves from the “bad others” to construct a “beautiful-and-good” female image.

The ideal women image identified by belly dancers corresponds to many studies of womanhood in modern East Asian discourse—a traditional minded woman but also a consumer who cares about her looks. By creatively integrating traditional and modern gender images, Taiwanese belly dancers show that traditional virtues can be maintained even while participating in a dance with feminist connotations and erotic stigma. This chapter also shows that people from older generations or rural areas are more likely to have negative impressions of belly dance due to the influence of traditional “sexy show” customs. Through providing ethnography of women’s leisure dance participation, this study shows how women negotiate various gender role expectations as well as their practice in body-beauty and health consumption in a society that went through rapid social change and a process of compressed modernity.

Conclusion

Confucian values strongly influenced gender stereotypes in Taiwan in the past. According to traditional stereotypes, women were relegated to the domestic sphere, and the ideal “good” woman was expected to be modest, frugal, virtuous, caring and filial. In contrast, expressing femininity, charm or beauty outside of the household was considered indecent. Women who danced in public might be regarded as “dancing girls,” i.e. members of the “bad women” category. The prosperity of the mass media and beauty industry brought about the “body beauty” boom in Taiwan in the 1990s, which has resulted in the “leisure exercise for body slimming” trend of Taiwanese women leisure exercise. Belly dance was introduced to Taiwan in 2002, primarily marketed as a “body slimming exercise” with a sense of Middle Eastern exoticism.

The dance was taught in Community universities in the beginning, the well known adult education system where mature women comprise the majority of students. It claimed to be a low-impact exercise that offers enough “exercise results” that most participants desire. Previous studies assert that belly dance has become an emerging leisure dance in Taiwan. According to these studies, weight-losing, body-shaping, exercise and exotic image are the main motivations for most participants. While these studies generally regard “the development of belly dance in Taiwan” as a popular fad, this study locates the population of belly dance in the historical context of Taiwanese society, aiming to give a deeper interpretation of this phenomenon.

The first purpose of this study was to explore the developing process and localizing features of belly dance in Taiwan. By analyzing the promotion strategies of pioneering advocates, news reports, and firsthand data from fieldwork and interviews,

I conclude that there are five features of the present development of belly dance in Taiwan: 1. Numerous community based belly dance classes and performances; 2. Mature women as major participants; 3. An emphasis on the effects for body-beauty and femininity enhancing; 4. Hybrid representation of the Middle East; 5. Competition for health and national pride. Besides, I argue the prevalent media discourse of women's empowerment through external changes, the marketing strategies adopted by the pioneering promoters of belly dance, and the government's policies on sports, health and diplomacy play important roles in shaping the cultural landscape of Taiwanese belly dance.

The second purpose of this study was to identify the connections between belly dance, women's gender practice, and the idea of womanhood in present Taiwanese society. Contrary to traditional gender expectations, the display of the body and femininity is encouraged in belly dancing. Previous studies showed that married or older Taiwanese women are still more constrained by traditional gender expectations; interestingly, they have become the majority of belly dance participants in Taiwan. To defend their involvement in belly dance, I found most interviewees flexibly coordinate the traditional and the modern, taking as their image of the ideal woman one that combines the modern notion of beauty with the traditional notion of goodness. Asserting that their motivation to belly dance is for exercise or leisure (rather than for money or pleasing men), a frugal and natural approach to acquire femininity and beauty, interviewees differentiate themselves from the "bad others"—i.e. dancing girls, social butterflies, material girls, and artificial beauties—to construct a "beautiful-and-good" female image. By creatively integrating traditional and modern gender images, Taiwanese belly dancers show that traditional virtues can be maintained even while participating in a dance with feminist connotations and erotic

stigma. The ideal women image identified by belly dancers corresponds to the studies of womanhood in modern East Asian discourse.

Taking belly dance as its central subject, this dissertation contributes to the study of cultural interaction between global and local spheres. Moreover, this study shows how women negotiate various gender role expectations as well as their practice in body-beauty and health consumption in a society that went through rapid social change and a process of compressed modernity. The results may enrich the scholarship of anthropology, sociology of leisure sport and the gender studies in Asia. Moreover, it can fill a gap in the literature because most of the former studies concerning belly dance have focused on the United States and the Middle East.

Future Directions

Through working on my doctoral project, I found that belly dance is a good medium for exploring women's consumption of beauty and health. I also found that women's involvement in belly dance provides an interesting space to examine modern women's gender practice in societies with a Confucian tradition. My future research hopes to expand to other Asian societies including China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, and Korea. My experiences of dancing and doing research in Taiwan, Japan, and the United States let me observe interesting differences between these cultural contexts. In my postdoctoral year, I want to probe into the composition (i.e. age, class) of participants as well as the cultural landscape of belly dance represented in different societies. I also intend to discover other trends regarding women's leisure participation and body consumption resulting from the changing family demography in Asia.

Additionally, while I was retracing the development of belly dance in Taiwan over the past ten years, I noticed that Taiwanese dancers used to participate in more belly dance events held in Egypt or Turkey. Participation in these overseas events is usually described as a kind of pilgrimage to experience the authentic culture of the dance. However, the trend has changed. There are now many more large-scaled belly dance competitions, workshops and festivals taking place in Asia every year, which are commonly organized by representatives from different Asian countries. These events recruit dancers from all over the world to join, and invite famous dancers from Asia, the Middle East and the United States to teach workshops or to judge competitions. Participation fees for these events are generally high. They mostly include a bazaar selling gorgeous belly dance products; local tours and cultural experiences are commonly included on the agenda as well. I think the phenomenon

deserves more attention as the traveling trajectory of Asian dancers has shifted from “going out of Asia” to “traveling around Asia” and “attracting dancers into Asia.” In my postdoctoral stage, I want to explore further the cooperation among Asian belly dance communities. Besides, I am very interested in keeping track of the emerging phenomenon of combining belly dance events with tourist business and local cultural promotion in Asia.

In my doctoral study, I noticed that Middle Eastern exoticism is primarily appropriated by the media as a feature of belly dance, though in fact it is a hybrid of various cultural elements which are not necessarily related to the Middle East. A new project that I hope to start in my postdoctoral stage is to examine the discourse of other dance or body works which are also highlighted for their exotic or ethnic images in the leisure exercise industry, such as Hawaiian Hula dance, Tahitian dance, Brazilian Capoeira, Indian Odissi dance, and African dance. I noticed that in the promotion fliers of these activities it is common to see exoticism or concepts of traditional therapy intertwined with functions like exercise, body-beauty and health. I am interested in exploring how these discourses were constructed and how people interpret and perceive the therapeutic benefits of doing these activities.

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Appendix

Appendix 1-1 Annual Report, Sports Affairs Council, Executive Yuan (2007~2010)

Year	Outline of the Yearly Accomplishments
2007	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enhancing Public Fitness and Quality of Life 2. Promotion of Marine Sports <li style="background-color: #e0e0e0;">3. Promotion of Athletic Activities for Women 4. Promotion of Youth Physical Fitness and Sports Activities 5. Promotion of Physical Activities for Workers 6. Promotion of Bicycle Sports 7. Promotion of Hiking Sports 8. Promotion of Youth Football 9. Promoting Indigenous Athletics 10. Enhancing Promotion of Special Sports 11. Enhancement of Athlete Training for the 2009 Taipei Deaflympics 12. Preserving and Raising the Profile of Folk Sports 13. Assistance for Non-Asian Games and Non-Olympics Groups in Holding Physical Fitness and Competition Activities
2008	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enhancing Public Fitness and Quality of Life 2. Promotion of Marine Sports <li style="background-color: #e0e0e0;">3. Promotion of Sports Activities for Women 4. Promotion of Youth Physical Fitness and Sports Activities 5. Promotion of Cycling Sports 6. Promoting Indigenous Peoples Sports and Physical Fitness 7. Promotion of Special Sports 8. Enhancement of Athletes Training for the 21st Summer Deaflympics Games Taipei 9. Enhancement of Training for Athletes of the 2009 World Games 10. Preservation and Propagation of Traditional Folk Sports 11. Preservation and Propagation of Traditional Folk Sports
2009	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enhance National Fitness and Lifestyle Quality 2. Promote Marine Sports <li style="background-color: #e0e0e0;">3. Promote Female Sports 4. Promote Youth Leisure Sports 5. Promote Cycling 6. Promote Indigenous Sports

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Promote Special Sports 8. Strengthen 21st 2009 Taipei Deaflympics Athletes Training 9. Strengthen Athlete Training in 2009 World Games 10. Preserve and Glorify Folk Sports 11. Assist non-Asian or Olympic Sports Groups in Organizing Sports Events and Competitions
2010	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Raised National Fitness and Quality of Life. 2. Promoted Sports for Women 3. Promoted Leisure Sports for Youth 4. Promoted Cycling 5. Promoted Sports Events for Indigenous People 6. Promoted Special Sports 7. Assisted 31 folk sports groups 8. Assisted Non-Olympic and Non-Asian Games international sports organizations

Data collected from the Annual Reports of SAC 2007-2010

Appendix 1-2 Request for Interview

(Version 1)

老師您好

我叫張育綺,目前是日本早稻田大學運動科學研究科的研究生.我正在撰寫畢業論文,主題是關於"肚皮舞在台灣的發展以及對女性身心健康的助益".先前拜訪中華民國國際舞蹈運動總會時,曾紐朗理事長建議我可以跟您請教肚皮舞的相關知識和經驗.

我 7/29-8/10 這段時間會回台灣,希望有機會到您的課堂觀摩,並和您做一個簡單的訪談(30-40 分鐘).如果您願意接受我的訪談或是能讓我到您的課堂觀摩,請告訴我您方便的時間和地點.若您對這個研究有任何疑問,我非常樂意做進一步的介紹和解釋.(如果方便給我 EMAIL,我可以先寄研究簡介及訪談大綱請您參考) 非常希望有機會和您見面,也期待能盡快收到您的回覆~謝謝!

祝平安

育綺

(Version2)

老師您好

我叫張育綺,目前是日本早稻田大學運動科學研究科的研究生.我正在撰寫畢業論文,主題是關於"肚皮舞在台灣的發展以及對女性身心健康的助益".

我從您教室的部落格及媒體報導得知您近年在台南地區致力於肚皮舞的教學與推廣.我這兩天剛回台灣放暑假到 8/10,非常希望有機會到您的課堂觀摩,並做一個簡單的訪談(30-40 分鐘)請教關於肚皮舞的知識及您的教學經驗.

如果您願意接受我的訪談或是能讓我到您的課堂觀摩,請告訴我您方便的時間.若您對這個研究有任何疑問歡迎提出,我非常樂意做進一步的介紹和解釋.(如果您有興趣,我可以寄研究簡介及訪談大綱請您參考) 非常希望有機會和您見面,也期待盡快收到您的回覆,謝謝!

祝平安

育綺

Appendix 1-3 List of interviewees

Name	Age	Experience of belly dancing (around)	Experience of teaching belly dance (around)
Aisha	30	7	5
Chen	49	9	9
Fifi	30	7	7
Liron	35	7	7
Lotus	48	8	8
Lucy	43	8	7
Sofia	41	7	6
Eva	34	10	6
Green	33	4	NA
Blanca	46	4	NA
Bobo	32	4	NA
Jade	35	4	NA
Jen	62	8	NA
Apricot	53	4	NA
Pearl	52	4	NA
Laura	56	6	NA
Sun	45	6	NA
Dawn	41	6	NA
Snow	57	5	NA
Chloe	50	6	NA
Jean	44	6	NA

Appendix 1-4 *Informed consent*

研究參加者說明

1. 研究名稱

肚皮舞(東方舞)與台灣女性身心健康

2. 研究背景與目的

儒家思想一直以來影響台灣人生活的諸多面像。許多研究指出，儒家思想對女性的規範以及女性角色期待，自古以來對女性休閒運動/身體活動的參與形成阻礙。然而，過去十年間肚皮舞逐漸在台灣發展為一熱門的女性休閒運動，參與者涵蓋不同年齡層，媒體報導也經常提及肚皮舞對女性的健康助益。本研究的目的為深入探討以下三點:

- (1)傳統文化規範是否/如何影響您的肚皮舞參與經驗?
- (2)您對於肚皮舞健康助益的理解以及親身感受
- (3)您所知道/推廣的肚皮舞身體意象、生活態度為何?

3. 研究方法

如果您同意參與本研究，我們將與您進行一次深度訪談。本研究預計訪談 25 位舞齡 3 年以上的成年肚皮舞者。訪談將會在您練舞的地方(如舞蹈教室、社區中心、體育館、學校)或是其他對您較方便的場所進行，過程約 40 分鐘。訪談將全程錄音，研究者將於訪談後把錄音內容謄寫成文字。

4. 研究時間與地點

本研究訪談的部分將於台灣的舞蹈相關場地進行並錄音。訪談的錄音資料將於早稻田大學東伏見校區 75 號館 203 研究室進行質性研究分析。台灣的訪談調查預定期程為 2012 年 7 月 28 日到 2012 年 8 月 10 日。於早稻田大學東伏見校區 75 號館 203 研究室進行資料分析的預定時間為 2012 年 8 月 11 日至 2014 年 3 月 31 日。每位研究參加者的參與時間為一天(長度約 40 分鐘)。

5. 研究實施者

張育綺 (早稻田大學運動科學研究科 博士課程 3 年生) 研究實施者

寒川恒夫 (早稻田大學運動科學學術院 教授) 研究負責人

6. 研究資料

本研究獲得的參加者個人資料與資訊，僅用於學術研究，不為公開。如有其他疑義請向研究實施者提出。

7. 研究參加的任意性

參加本研究是完全自願性的，拒絕參加並不會造成任何負面影響。

如果您一開始同意參加但之後決定退出，請在說明文件最後一頁**同意撤回書**簽名後提交給研究實施者。在此之後，本研究將不會使用任何和您相關的資料。然而，若您提出同意撤回時研究成果已發表或出版則無法再進行更改。

聯絡人

姓名:張育綺 (早稻田大學運動科學研究科 博士課程 3 年生)

電話:0938-175501 e-mail:pecco131@fuji.waseda.jp

8. 參加研究的理由

您的肚皮舞參與經驗將非常有助於本研究了解肚皮舞與台灣女性健康的關聯，以及傳統文化規範對現代女性參與肚皮舞的影響。

9. 研究中止

部分參加者在回答年齡、婚姻狀態、學肚皮舞的動機等問題時會產生心理上的不適。您有權利拒絕回答問題或是在任何時間退出本研究。

10. 參加此研究的風險

參與本研究的共伴風險非常小，但部分參加者在回答訪談問題時可能產生心理上的不適。您有權利拒絕回答問題或是在任何時間退出本研究。

11. 研究的益處

本研究的結果將呈現肚皮舞對於女性健康助益的實證經驗，有助於研究和授課者們建立和傳遞健康促進訊息。此外，本研究獲得的資料將展現台灣社會文化背景對女性參與身體活動的影響，提供亞洲社會的經驗與觀點以豐富世界的肚皮舞研究。

12. 個人資料使用

您的個人情報與訪談資訊僅限於本研究使用，在未經您同意的情況下絕不會公開或使用於其他場合。

您的個人情報與資訊我們會非常嚴密的保存，電腦及隨身硬碟皆會鎖上密碼，謹慎防止資料外洩和遺失。

您提出的研究參加同意書將由本研究負責人 寒川恒夫 保管，並於研究結束後以碎紙機銷毀。

13. 研究結束後研究結果發表

本研究結果可能會在學術期刊/會議/書籍上發表，或用於教學。但是您的名字和個人資料將不會在任何發表的材料中出現，除非事先取得您的同意。

14. 研究經費

本研究經費來自早稻田大學運動科學學術院 Global COE 計畫。

15. 研究參加者的報酬

本研究的參與為自願性質故無法提供報酬。

16. 知識財產權的歸屬

本研究結果的知識財產權屬於早稻田大學，而非實驗參加者所有。

疑問與申訴聯絡

研究計畫內容相關疑問請洽

研究實施者:張育綺 (早稻田大學運動科學研究科 博士課程 3 年生)

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研究倫理審查或申訴相關請洽

人を対象とする研究に関する倫理委員会 (研究推進部)

電話號碼:(+81)03-5272-4652

e-mail:rinri@list.waseda.jp

請仔細閱讀以上說明，若已確定了解並同意參加此研究，請在**參加同意書**簽名並寫上日期後交給研究實施者。

Appendix 1-5 Consent form

研究参加への同意書

研究責任者: 寒川 恒夫 殿
早稲田大学スポーツ科学学術院教授

研究計画名: Healthy Benefits of Belly Dance Interpreted in Taiwan

私は、研究計画名「Healthy Benefits of Belly Dance Interpreted in Taiwan」に関する以下の事項について説明を受けました。理解した項目については自分で□の中に入れて示しました。

- 研究の背景と目的（説明文書 項目 2）
- 研究の方法（説明文書 項目 3）
- 研究の場所と期間（説明文書 項目 4）
- 研究を実施する者（説明文書 項目 5）
- 研究に関する資料の開示について（説明文書 項目 6）
- 研究への参加が任意であること（研究への参加は任意であり、参加しないことで不利益な対応を受けないこと。また、いつでも同意を撤回でき、撤回しても何ら不利益を受けないこと。）（説明文書 項目 7）
- 私がこの研究への参加を依頼された理由（説明書 項目 8）
- 私がこの研究への参加を中断することになる条件（説明文書 9）
- この研究への参加に伴う危害の可能性について（説明文書 項目 10）
- 研究により期待される便益について（説明文書 項目 11）
- 個人情報の取り扱い（被験者のプライバシーの保護に最大限配慮すること）（説明文書 12）
- 研究終了後の対応と研究成果の公表について（説明文書 13）
- 研究のための費用（説明文書 項目 14）
- 研究の参加に伴う参加者の方への謝金等（説明書 項目 15）
- 知的財産権の帰属（説明書 項目 16）
- 問い合わせ先および苦情等の連絡先

これらの事項について確認したうえで、この研究に参加することに同意します。

.....年.....月.....日

参加者署名.....

本研究に関する説明を行い、自由意思による同意が得られたことを確認します。

説明担当者（所属、資格、氏名）.....（自署）

Appendix 1-6 Interview guide

訪談大綱

(一)個人資訊

1. 請問你的出生年份?
2. 請問你的婚姻狀態?
3. 請問你的職業?
4. 請問你的居住地? (市/縣)

(二)肚皮舞經驗

1. 請問你跳肚皮舞(授課)多久了?
2. 你參與肚皮舞相關活動的頻率? 活動的類型?
3. 你開始跳肚皮舞的原因為何?(動機)
4. 請和我分享你學習肚皮舞的經歷
5. 你從事哪些類型的肚皮舞?(舞風)
6. 你通常從哪裡獲得肚皮舞相關資訊?

(三)肚皮舞與健康

1. 請問就你所知，肚皮舞對生理有哪些健康助益?
2. 請問就你所知，肚皮舞對心理有哪些健康助益?
(如情緒、生活態度、價值觀等)
3. 請問你從哪裡習得關於肚皮舞的健康知識?
4. 你是否感覺自己因為學習肚皮舞而產生改變?若有請和我分享你的經驗
5. 學習肚皮舞後，你是否對自己感到比較滿意或比較有自信(外形、內在、生活等各方面)?若有請和我分享你的感受

(四)肚皮舞與社會規範

1. 家人對於你跳肚皮舞的態度為何?
2. 你是否和父母或岳父母同住?
3. 你跳肚皮舞(或參與其他休閒活動)是否需要先徵求誰的同意?為什麼?
4. 當別人知道你在跳肚皮舞時，他們的反應、評論是什麼?
5. 當別人知道你在跳肚皮舞時，他們通常問你什麼樣的問題?

Appendix 2-1 Major Events of TDSF (2005-2012)

2005	<p>正式成立國際舞蹈運動協會 肚皮舞在台對外唯一國際窗口</p> <p>受邀 新加坡肚皮舞金氏紀錄 晚會表演</p> <p>主辦 第一屆台灣肚皮舞公開賽</p> <p>受邀 明星棒球賽開場 Show</p> <p>主辦 台灣肚皮舞觀摩交流賽</p> <p>受邀 新加坡文化藝術節遊行、表演</p>
2006	<p>受邀 台北年貨大街嘉年華 文化踩街、策劃編舞</p> <p>主辦 第一屆亞洲肚皮舞大賽台灣區甄選賽</p> <p>榮獲 第一屆亞洲肚皮舞大賽(新加坡) 第二名、第三名</p> <p>台灣唯一推動孕婦肚皮舞機構 (適懷孕三個月以上)</p> <p>推動 肚皮舞快閃聯盟</p> <p>台灣唯一推動森巴肚皮舞機構</p> <p>第二屆台灣肚皮舞公開賽</p> <p>受邀 參加杭州旅遊文化藝術</p> <p>受邀 台北夢想藝術嘉年會踩街、 森巴肚皮舞表演</p> <p>台灣唯一推動金齡肚皮舞機構 (60 歲以上)</p> <p>受邀 參加韓國國際肚皮舞大賽 榮獲第一名、第三名</p> <p>主辦第一屆遠東盃肚皮舞大賽</p> <p>主辦 第一屆全國肚皮舞交流公演</p> <p>主辦 不可思議印度文化節暨印度舞大賽</p> <p>美國夏威夷國家大學 簽訂台灣培訓肚皮舞師資唯一機構</p> <p>受邀 參加世界華人藝術節—廣州江門</p>
2007	<p>獲德國肚皮舞年鑑肯定 榮登年鑑，刊登台灣肚皮舞歷年競賽</p> <p>遠赴 美國夏威夷大學研修舞蹈教練</p> <p>遠赴 美國夏威夷國家大學榮獲高階舞蹈教練</p> <p>主辦第一屆全國社區大學肚皮舞錦標賽</p> <p>受邀 台東南島文化節 「原·夢」藝術大遊行</p> <p>主辦 第三屆台灣肚皮舞公開賽</p> <p>主辦 第二屆亞洲肚皮舞大賽台北</p> <p>2007 夢想肚皮舞藝術嘉年華(凱達格蘭大道)</p> <p>受邀 參加 Nagwa Fouad 盃國際肚皮舞大賽-韓國 囊括前三名</p> <p>受邀 參加國際肚皮舞大會-美國</p> <p>指導 麗麗盃印度舞大賽</p> <p>主辦 台灣肚皮舞藝術貢獻獎頒獎典禮暨全國肚皮舞交流公演</p>
2008	<p>主辦 第一屆台灣印度舞創意大賽</p> <p>主辦 第二屆全國社區大學肚皮舞錦標賽</p>

	<p>主辦 第四屆台灣肚皮舞公開賽</p> <p>主辦 2008 國際肚皮舞台灣甄選賽</p> <p>主辦 亞洲肚皮舞台灣甄選賽</p> <p>主辦 遠東區肚皮舞公開賽</p> <p>主辦 全國肚皮舞交流公演</p> <p>主辦 完美舞神選拔</p> <p>受邀 擔任亞洲肚皮舞新加坡甄選賽評審</p> <p>榮獲 美國第十八屆 BDUC 全球肚皮舞比賽 融合組第二名、紗巾組第二名</p> <p>榮獲 第九屆埃及肚皮舞公開賽冠軍</p> <p>榮獲 亞洲肚皮舞大賽 團體組第三名、個人組一、二、三獎</p> <p>榮獲 韓國國際肚皮舞大賽 個人組金獎、銅獎、團體組銅獎</p> <p>受邀 參與 2008 世界夢想嘉年華</p>
2009	<p>主辦 牽情兩地展彩虹台灣澳門交流演出</p> <p>主辦 舞動傳愛心 88 賑災募款晚會</p> <p>受邀 參加杭州旅遊文化藝術節</p> <p>(資料遺失)</p>
2010	<p>總統盃東方舞大賽</p> <p>全國社區大學肚皮舞錦標賽</p> <p>臺北市青年盃校園東方舞錦標賽</p> <p>台灣肚皮舞公開賽</p> <p>全國舞蹈運動交流公演</p> <p>全球東方舞藝術家大賽</p> <p>亞太區國際東方舞大賽</p> <p>首爾世界肚皮舞大賽</p> <p>遠東區國際肚皮舞大賽</p> <p>乙級/丙級東方舞教練研習</p> <p>乙級/丙級東方舞裁判研習</p>
2011	<p>International Adult Oasis Festival (Russia)</p> <p>International Dance Trophy (Italy)</p> <p>全國社區大學肚皮舞錦標賽</p> <p>東方舞藝術家大賽</p> <p>東方舞藝術家 CEO 研習</p> <p>台灣印度舞創意大賽</p> <p>多元部落舞蹈嘉年華</p> <p>亞太區創意肚皮舞邀請賽(中國四川)</p> <p>台灣肚皮舞公開賽</p> <p>全國舞蹈運動交流公演</p> <p>五項小鐵人舞蹈運動競賽</p>

	<p>Premier Festa Orientale</p> <p>乙級/丙級東方舞教練研習</p> <p>乙級/丙級東方舞裁判研習</p>
2012	<p>總統盃東方舞大賽</p> <p>全國社區大學肚皮舞錦標賽</p> <p>臺北市青年盃校園東方舞錦標賽</p> <p>中正盃全國東方舞競技大賽暨首爾世界肚皮舞大賽台灣甄選賽</p> <p>台灣肚皮舞公開賽</p> <p>全國舞蹈運動交流公演</p> <p>全球東方舞藝術家大賽</p> <p>亞太區國際東方舞大賽</p> <p>首爾世界肚皮舞大賽</p> <p>遠東區國際肚皮舞大賽</p> <p>乙級/丙級東方舞教練研習</p> <p>乙級/丙級東方舞裁判研習</p>