

“Dynamic Embodiment”: The Transformation and Progression of Cultural Beings through Dancing*

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This paper reflects on the notion of “embodiment” by emphasizing its socially bound nature, exemplified in the ethnographic study of dancing among people living on Taketomi Island in southern Okinawa. Following Farnell and Varela’s notion of dynamic embodiment (2008), which conceives the moving body as a “cultural way of being human,” and Japanese philosophical notions such as “field of relation,” I analyze the process of embodiment in dancing within Taketomi communities, which leads the islanders through different categories of cultural beings, from *uchina* (the Okinawans), *odoriko* (the dancers), to *yaninchu* (the family). Through my consideration of this dynamic embodiment, I suggest how the significant transformative process of “being Taketomian” can be realized through bodily practice such as dancing among both native islanders and newcomers, as well as the nature of self-socio existence in a unique cultural world.

Keywords: “dynamic embodiment,” the body, dance, Taketomi Island, *minitsukeru*

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Ever since the notion of embodiment was posed and its paradigmatic value noted by Csordas (1990), scholars have explored various transformations centered on human beings' bodily experiences and their cultural implications (e.g., Davis 1997). The popularity of the embodiment concept also brings in a new question: Is "embodiment" homogeneous? Does the complexity of sociality also make its mark on how people are embodied? How might it do so? More specifically, are we talking about the same thing if the experiences are those of a ritual healer and a disco dancer? This paper reflects on these questions by considering embodiment's socially bound nature.

Anthropological Studies of Dance and the Body

Even as a highly identifiable institution (Spencer 1985) in both ethnographic and visual senses, dance has nevertheless been relatively invisible in anthropological research, perhaps due to its conceptual and methodological impediments (Gell 1985; Hanna 1979). In addition to reflecting the "humanist" traditions of early anthropology (Boas 1972[1944]; Evans-Pritchard 1928; Radcliffe-Brown 1964[1922]; Turnbull 1962), research on dance partakes in "collisions" in the social sciences between mind and body (Farnell 2000), between experiencing the "other" and self (Polhemus 1975),¹ between popular discourses and academic issues (Hastrup and Hervik 1994; Turner 1996), and between ethnographic fact and representation.² A central locus of these collisions has been studies of the body.

Among the earliest reflections on anthropology's lack of interest in the body is Polhemus' (1975) comment that anthropologists discovered the body among "others." This observation on conceptual ethnocentrism was later echoed by sociologist Turner, who claimed that the rise of study of the body responded to the speedy materialization of and consumption in Western societies. His statement declares study of the body to be a socio-historic subject (Turner 1996). In her introductory article in *Embodied Practices*:

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- 1 I am clearly aware of the inherited nature of the production of anthropological knowledge (Fabian 1983). Most prominent scholars writing on dance from an anthropological approach have had their own experiences of dance, including Keälinohomoku, Kaepler, Hanna, Williams, Farnell, Gore, and myself, while pursuing ethnographic investigation in the worlds of "others."
 - 2 Some key reflections about representation come from visual anthropology. The use of visual media as a way of recording, interpreting, and presenting the ethnographic data has relocated dance to cultural contexts that emphasize its highly visual aspects. Discussion of relevant issues can be found in Hughes-Freeland (1991, 1992, 1999).

Feminist Perspectives on the Body, Davis (1997) notes the sociological argument that the vast interest in the body inside and outside academia reflects changes of late modernity. The "body craze" not only corresponds to current socio-cultural conditions, but also to broad theoretical developments inspired by feminism since the 1980s. From her primarily feminist perspective, Davis acknowledges Foucault's groundbreaking contribution to "understanding the body as object of processes of discipline and normalization," as well as "a metaphor for critical discussions which link power to knowledge, sexuality, and subjectivity" (Foucault 1978, 1979, 1980, 1988, cited in Davis 1997: 3). Postmodern critics further assert universal "grand narratives" concerning the body and debate its position as a "reference point in a world of flux and the epitome of that same flux... [and] the site par excellence for exploring the construction of different subjectivities or the myriad workings of disciplinary power" (Frank 1990, quoted in Davis 1997: 4). According to the post-modern view:

The enormous diversity in the appearance and comportment of the body in different cultures is also used by social scientists as an argument for social constructionism. Cultural variation in embodiment and bodily practices show just how untenable the notion of a "natural body" is, making the body an ideal starting point for a critique of universality, objectivity of absolutism. [Davis 1997: 4]

For social scientists, the sheer diversity of the body among different cultures warrants attention, but for anthropologists it is rooted in the epistemology of the discipline itself (Douglas 1966, 1973). Anthropologists often reflect on how meanings and practices surrounding the body differ from culture to culture. In his inspiring thesis written from a comparative perspective, Mauss (1973) did not pursue the issue of body technique from a symbolic-structural standpoint—the influential paradigm at that time on both sides of the North Atlantic. He observed and highlighted the dynamic disposition *habitus*, and, instead of treating the body as structurally mediated the way Douglas did, gave the body a certain social agency. His concept of *habitus* refers to "a set of dispositions and generative schemas that incline people to act in certain ways" (Farnell 2000: 399). Adopting Mauss' idea, Bourdieu (1977) described *habitus* as:

...a principle generating and unifying all practices, the system of inseparably cognitive and evaluating structures which organizes the vision of the world in accordance with the objective structures of a determinate state of the social world:

this principle is nothing other than *the socially informed body*, with...all its senses.³
[Bourdieu 1977: 124, italics original]

According to Bourdieu, the socially informed body (with its capacity for a generic *habitus* schema) also carries tacit but practical knowledge.⁴ Knowledge comes from understanding. In addition to anthropological and sociological enquiries, linguists who used to explore language as a representation of mind also turned to the body for human understanding. Johnson's (1987) theory of embodied meaning delves deeper into the "semantics of understanding":

Imagination is central to human meaning and rationality for the simple reason that what we can experience and cognize as meaningful, and how we can reason about it, both depend upon structures of imagination that make our experience what it is. On this view, meaning is not situated solely in propositions; instead it permeates our embodied, spatial, temporal, culturally formed, and value-laden understanding.
[Johnson 1987: 172]

Johnson argue for the embodied root of human rationality, while, from a phenomenological point of view, Merleau-Ponty delineates the process of knowledge achieving by linking the self (the knowing subject) to the world, which is mediated through the body's motion:

The body's motion can play a part in the perception of the world only if it is itself intentionality, a manner of relating itself to the distinct object of knowledge. The world around us must be, not a system of objects we synthesize, but a totality of things, open to us, towards which we project ourselves. [Merleau-Ponty 1999[1962]: 387]

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- 3 These senses include the body's "tastes and distastes, its compulsions and repulsions...in a word, all its senses, that is to say, not only the traditional five senses—which never escape the structuring action of social determinism—but also the sense of the balance and the sense of beauty, common sense and the sense of the sacred, tactical sense and the sense of responsibility, business sense and the sense of propriety, the sense of humor and the sense of absurdity, moral sense and the sense of practicality, and so on" (Bourdieu 1977: 124).
 - 4 It is noteworthy that Bourdieu's notion of habitus has been criticized as lack of agentive power by replacing rules with dispositions (Farnell 2000: 403).

It is interesting to note how the social and humanistic sciences, or different knowledge systems, have been gradually embodied in the twentieth century. Unavoidably, the study of dance has benefited from the interdisciplinary interest in and the fruitful debate about the body, since it is in dance that humans are most creative with their bodies, declaring tacit knowledge and enacting imagination that is embodied and culturally formed. To explore the body in dance, of course, requires special attention to the moving body.

From the Body to the Moving Body

While study of the body has inspired interdisciplinary interest, the literature review above shows that in most cases the body is analyzed as an intact entity, not a moving agent. Explorations of the body that moves, inspired by the phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty, constitute a key philosophical lever against the Cartesian dualism that splits body from mind.

Our body, to the extent that it moves itself about, that is, to the extent that it is inseparable from a view of the world and is that view itself brought into existence, is the condition of possibility, not only geometric synthesis, but of all expressive operations and all acquired views which constitute the cultural world. [Merleau-Ponty 1999[1962]: 388]

Merleau-Ponty's "body that moves and constitutes the cultural world" has been influential among scholars (Csordas 1990; Farnell and Varela 2008) and has resulted in an internal objection to Cartesian philosophy, a "revolution" (Farnell and Varela 2008). Farnell and Varela have reviewed anthropological and sociological explorations of the body and coined the term *first somatic revolution*, which challenges disembodied theories of human actions—framed as practices, discourse, and embodiment. For them, scholars such as Lakoff and Johnson (1980), Jackson (1983), and Csordas (1990), who recognize the bias sustained by Cartesian dualism, nonetheless themselves retain a "residual positivism and mentalism" (Farnell 1996: 312). In Lakoff and Johnson's argument, this occurs by their importing an image schema to the body, and in the Jackson-Csordas paradigm by distinguishing embodiment as a somatic, and therefore alternative, approach to the semiotic (Farnell 1996; Farnell and Varela 2008). Both approaches emphasize "talk of the experienced body from a subjectivist lived standpoint" (2008: 218), in which the mover as agent is still unacknowledged.

Following views from the new Realism and Semasiology, Farnell and Varela propose a dynamically embodied social theory, which they term *the second somatic revolution*.

Neither minds nor bodies intend, only people do, because as embodied persons they are causally empowered to engage in social and reflexive commentary with the primary resources of vocal and kinetic systems of semiosis provided by their cultural ways of being human. [Farnell and Varela 2008: 221, italics original]

Farnell and Varela support Merleau-Ponty's proposal that consciousness is in the first place not a matter of "I think," but "I can." They accordingly claim that a theory of dynamic embodiment is a "theory of *moving being*," which emphasizes:

...the embodiment of the *doing* and not simply the feeling of that embodied doing. The upshot of this special theoretical focus is the understanding that human physical being is *moving being*. It is in this precise sense that it can be said that paradigm of dynamic embodiment stands today as one way to realize the full significance of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of embodied consciousness. [Farnell and Varela 2008: 221, italics original]

To relocate the agency in the person, especially the person who moves constantly, Farnell and Varela conjoin the often-separated explanations—the somatic paradigm and the semiotic one—of human action:

The embodiment of agentive persons enables them to use their physical beings (or to use themselves)—via the acquisition of techniques, skills, and rules—to move meaningfully throughout the worlds of nature and culture. [Farnell and Varela 2008: 220]

Bodies that Move as Dancers: Cross-Cultural Comparisons

Besides Farnell and Varela's call for reflection on the Western philosophical tradition that will shift the perspective of analysis on the body, another track of inquiry highlights the benefits of an anthropological approach, that is, to explore the concept and practice of the moving body cross-culturally. In this section, I discuss the ethnographic

analyses of dance in Java and Japan respectively, for their alternative cultural schemes that both sustain performance and differ from Western Cartesian ideology.

As Hughes-Freeland has shown in her study of Javanese court dance, issues such as rationality and morality can be tackled by means of "a moving together of reason, emotion and body" (Parkin 1985: 142, quoted in Hughes-Freeland 1997: 55). She examines the Javanese court dance and argues that:

...performed movement is a form of self-control which constitutes a sociologically *particular Javanese version* of the way of knowing oneself and others; in other worlds, it refers to a sense of consciousness formulated as an aesthetic morality.
[Hughes-Freeland 1997: 59, author emphasis]

Hughes-Freeland shows that the study of techniques of the body "generates discourse and argument which provide important cultural reserves of understanding and orientation for philosophical abstractions..." (1997: 56). In the case of Javanese court dance, it mainly lies in the paired concepts of *lair-batin*. Examining their etymology,⁵ she argues that:

Everything has a mutual, relational aspect, expressed metaphorically as "a brick in its casting mould. " This Javanese two-in-one category transcends Western categories of ideal and real, and confounds simple dichotomies such as mind-body, with considerable implications for Javanese explanation of performance. [Hughes-Freeland 1997: 57]

Furthermore, not only does the *lair-batin* category transcend the body-mind dichotomy, the Javanese concepts of self (*aku*) and body also embrace the personal and socio-centric self which cannot be separated. "Where *lair-batin* is incommensurate with a mind-body dichotomy, *aku* is incommensurable with a self-society-other distinction." These indigenous terms and conceptions show that categories for understanding human experiences "favour complexity and boundary breaking," and suggest that "a Javanese field of consciousness is not commensurate with, say, the English one in an individual mode." In sum, Javanese semantics of the body do not allow "a separation of self from embodied self." In

5 Hughes-Freeland (1997) explains that, in Javanese, *lair* means "birth, by extension the physical body and the exoteric conditions arising from one's birth," and concerns "rules imposed by others, such as status, physical desires and so forth." On the other hand, *batin* is the "esoteric, questing, transformative and creative inner-self," and usually "refers to self-discovery." Both are "equally real in terms of human experience" (Hughes-Freeland 1997: 57).

both language and performance, the Javanese “recognize the self as a heterogeneous field of forces and potentials ... and not as an individual entity...” (Hughes-Freeland 1997: 56).

Exploring the practical dimensions of dancing, Hughes-Freeland identifies how the *lair-batin* concept is conjoined with the term *rasa*, which is at the peak of hierarchical cognitive vocabulary that constitutes the self. A Sanskrit term, *rasa* invokes sense making; it “makes the natural world cultural” by informing social practice pervasively.

It is the self-body-experience coordinates of consciousness which goes beyond field of art but bring perception, cognition and behavior in performance. [Hughes-Freeland 1997: 58]

As an education of *rasa*, dance movements “become mechanically right only after a dancer’s *rasa* is right, when the process is one of control and engagement of the *lair-batin*.” [Hughes-Freeland 1997: 60]

Hughes-Freeland shows how the exploration of dancing opens up questions leading to the corporeal cultural philosophy of a people, that is, the embodied knowledge of self and existence. Examining the embodying process of dancers, how their bodily practices are transformed into dance, contributes to the methodological as well as philosophical consideration (Kaepler 1972, 1985) of anthropological concerns with “cultural ways of being human.” These are not only directed toward the concept of self, but also toward ideas of the world, as explicated in Valentine’s study of Japanese dance:

Japanese concern with the fleeting moment is often concern *about*, and regret for, the passing show. Its fleeting aspect is regarded not only as especially worthy of attention and as contributing to its beauty, but also as a cause for sorrow. The acknowledgement of transience in Japanese poetry, for example, is often accompanied by a sense of melancholy concerning the passing of seasons and brevity of human and other life. Furthermore, the recognition of transience should not be taken to imply the lack of desire for performance: one may at the same time appreciate transient phenomena and yet wish to make them, or one’s experience of them, last as long as possible. In the case of Japanese dance, the fleeting moment may be extended to savour it at length. A brief episode may be dwelt upon in the flow of slowly developing movements, or the moment may even be frozen, as seen most obviously in the *mie* and less dramatically in the poses struck where pauses intersperse Japanese forms, both classical and non-classical. [Valentine 1998: 266-267, italics original]

The pause—the *mie* in Kabuki—has become a highly refined skill that prevails among the performance of Japanese dancers. It is also a “dynamic embodiment” of a spatiality and temporality unique to Japanese culture. To pause does not mean to stay in place but to make a space for time. The flow of dancing can therefore be viewed as combining metaphorical concepts of space and time in a way that the viewer’s experience of moment-to-moment existence is modified by manipulation of the performer’s presence against the normal scale of space and time in order to meet cultural—in this case, Japanese—preferences. Japanese dancers do not separate the somatic from the semantic, and this notion is rooted in their philosophy of the body.

Japanese Notions of the Body and the “Field of Relation”

In the following section I will focus on the Japanese concept of body-mind and its relationship to selfness, and how it is refined in the practice of art. This discussion will concentrate on Yuasa Yasuo’s argument, which is based on a Japanese philosophy rooted in Buddhist beliefs, and Watsuji Tetsurō’s concept of *ningen* (human beings).⁶

Yuasa Yasuo observes that a major tenet in the Japanese theory of the body is *shin-shin-ichi-nyo* 心身一如 (mind and body as one). This expression first appears in the writings of the Zen priest Ēsai (or Yōsai 榮西, 1141–1215) in the Japanese Middle Ages. At that time it indicated both internal meditation and external action moving towards the ideal condition of body-mind. The concept of *shin-shin-ichi-nyo* has been used in bodily practices as diverse as Judo and Noh. Yuasa further links the essence of meditation and practice by saying that “in Tōyō 東洋 (the Eastern World) bodily training without the training of character is considered evil. Therefore, in the past martial arts were a moving form of meditation. Meditation has the same aim of training of mind” (Yuasa 2007[1990]: 19).

In comparing Japanese theory and contemporary Western thought such as Merleau-Ponty’s notions about the body, Yuasa notes essential differences:

6 In this paper, I modified the Hepburn system to transcribe the Japanese or Okinawan vocabularies into Roman alphabets by using “-” (the macron) over long vowels to clarify pronunciation, except for widely used English terms such as Tokyo and Noh. To reflect the situation in Japan and Okinawa, I also attach Chinese characters since they are still largely used for literacy.

The philosophy of Merleau-Ponty explains that body has a double character, being both the subject and the object. It can be said that this releases the tension between body and mind and makes them unite. The unity of body-mind is not, however, seen in the Eastern tradition. Furthermore, it is the “inseparability” of body and mind ... that should be argued...The answer to questions such as what is called body, [as well as] what the mind-body relationship is, concerns the character of *ningen* 人間 (human beings). [Yuasa 2007[1990]: 20] ⁷

The term *ningen* has been explored by the philosopher Watsuji Tetsurō (和辻哲郎, 1889–1960) as a specific approach to the world of human beings. Alienated from Heidegger’s emphasis on the temporality of individual and collective existence, Watsuji focused on the *spatial* dimension of the existence of human beings. *Ningen*, originally from Buddhism, referred to the world of human beings. To understand this world, Watsuji focused on the dimensions of *aidagara* 間柄 (relation). The root of *Aidagara*, *aida* 間, denotes the existence of physical space. In Watsuji’s argument, the field of *aidagara* means the field of life in which various meanings of the living world interrelate. What is called “relation” is, according to Watsuji, the broadening of subjective space (Yuasa 2007[1990]: 30~31). The existence-in-relation hence implies existence in life-space. As human beings, we cannot exist in space without our bodies. The embodied “I” occupies the space of “here and now” and exists (Yuasa 2007[1990]: 33).

The temporal and spatial occupation of “here-now” as existence has become a major theme in Japanese aesthetic thought and is expressed in performing arts as shown above by Valentine. Not only the presentation of art, but also Japanese theories of performance are alienated from Western techniques of the body. Yuasa further identifies and promotes the major premise of Japanese epistemology: that real philosophical knowledge cannot merely rely on theoretic thought. Through *taidoku* 體得 (to master through the body) or *tainin* 體認 (to realize through the body) a person is able to know. The process of *shiyūyō* 修行 (practice) “pursues the drive of the complete mind-body to reach for real knowledge” (Yuasa 2007[1990]: 21). Originally from a philosophy established by the famous Buddhist priest Kūkai 空海 (774~835), *shiyūyō* means reversing the way of understanding the world that is rooted in our daily experience. It aims at cultivating the understanding we gain from the position of the self’s being-in-the-world. (Yuasa 2007[1990]: 204). *Shiyūyō* means to modify the mind according to the form (*katachi*) of the body. The consciousness yields to the body.

7 In this section, quotations from Yuasa (2007[1990]) are my translations from the Japanese.

This idea of practice has reached beyond religious thought to influence the theory of art in Japan. Taking the aforementioned *shin-shin-ichi-nyo* as the example, its practice implies achieving the uplifting condition where, for a skillful dancer, there is “not even the slightest disconnect between his mind and bodily movement” on stage (Yuasa 2007[1990]: 26). In this way, the practitioners realize the inseparability of body-mind in the process of training, which enables them to experience “the loss of the body’s weight as an object contradictory to the movement of the mind” (Yuasa 2007[1990]).⁸

As a whole, both the Javanese and Japanese theories of embodiment and performance have provided us with fruitful insights regarding the social theory of body, that is, the body as existence in the field of relation. The above literature on cross-cultural explorations of the body, however, also poses a noteworthy point in terms of epistemology. Both the Javanese and Japanese examples point to elite theories, whether in the Jogyakarta court or from Japanese Buddhism. How have such elite contemplations been realized in diverse groups of people or different social institutions in different cultural worlds? As Polhemus defines it, dance is “the stylized, highly redundant schema of a people’s overall physical culture, which is in itself the embodiment of that particular people’s unique way of life—their culture in the broadest sense of the term.” “Dance is the metaphysics of culture...a liqueur, which is distilled of the stuff of culture” (Polhemus 1993: 8-9). I shall now turn to how dance on Taketomi Island in southern Okinawa constitutes a dynamic embodiment that leads people to transformation across the cultural categories established by social boundaries.

Viewing the Okinawan Society and Culture through Dancing

What is “the field of relation” among Taketomian people? We can most meaningfully break this down using local terms that refer to various groupings and levels of collectivity: *uchina* (the Okinawans), *odoriko* 踊子 (a Japanese term literally meaning “dance kids”), and *yaninchu* (members of the same family). In Okinawa, “dancer” is neither an occupational nor an achievement-linked designation. Although there are professional

8 The Taiwanese Ya-Yueh 雅樂 (“the Ya Music”) exponent Chen Yu-Hsui has described a similar personal experience of dancing the Korean court dance, in which there was a short moment that ‘her body seemed disappeared.’ While she sensed that, her body moved automatically as if she did not have to memorize the dance. Later when she told a senior Korean court dancer of this special experience, she found out that the latter had shared similar experience. (Chen 1994: 6)

dance masters called *shishō* 師匠, the term *odoriko* refers to a social and temporal status of social actors (now mostly females) who qualify by virtue of a unique system of recognition and evaluation. The social process by which a general *uchina* becomes an *odoriko* involves more than professional instructors and has broader implications. This process in fact reflects religious, economic, and political dimensions that underline core Okinawan cultural values. The transformation of the dancing body along the identities of *uchina*, *odoriko*, and *yanincho* sheds light on how cultural knowledge and practices are polished, and sociality enacted.

Among these three terms, *uchina* and *yanincho* are Okinawan vernaculars, while *odoriko* is a Japanese term. The mixed use of both indigenous and Japanese terms in this paper points to the complicated status of Okinawa due to its political history. A prefecture of Japan today, Okinawa, a series of islands between Japan, China, and Taiwan, enjoyed a long period of autonomy before 1879. By the end of the fourteenth century the unified Kingdom of Chūzan (which later changed its name to the Ryūkyū Kingdom) had been established on the main island of Okinawa and would dominate the whole area by the late fifteenth century. In due course, the Shō Dynasty arose and achieved great prosperity due to its pivotal location and possession of an excellent international harbor that transshipped goods among China, Japan and Southeast Asia. Its location, however, had also doomed it to struggles with the neighboring superpowers, China and Japan, from whom the kingdom absorbed broad and long-term cultural stimuli.⁹ The main castle of Shuri, a World Heritage site since 2000, is located in Naha, the capital city, and symbolizes these influences perfectly (Chao 2001; Kerr 1958). The kingdom's tribute to China

9 From China, the Okinawan people adopted Chinese characters, the bureaucratic system, the lunar calendar and zodiac, and many animistic customs specifically in southern China with which Okinawan people built close relations through study and mutual migration. On the other hand, Okinawa and Japan share intimacy in their languages, which are believed to come from the same origin, although one German linguist has described to me that their difference is as large than that between German and English. In addition, Japanese influence can be seen in the styles of buildings and other crafts. Buddhism was also imported to Okinawa by way of Japanese monks.

officially ended in 1879 when the modernized Meiji government formally "annexed" Okinawa and made it part of Japan.¹⁰

One critical social and political issue that confronts the people's life in contemporary Okinawa is self-identity, which links all sorts of discourses, practices, and struggles, ranging from language and cultural preservation, recognition of artistic styles, interpretations of history, and even the US air base controversy. As a culturally unique but politically subordinate population, Okinawans have striven to negotiate the complicated flow of powers. Their categories of collectivity and self-identity are manifested even in the most creative aspects of cultural life, such as singing and dancing. They contribute significantly to contemporary ethnographies of Okinawa, which are produced multivocally and thus unavoidably contested.

Most Okinawans nowadays use standard Japanese in their daily communication. In the realm of traditional performing arts, such as songs and dramas, their own local vernacular prevails. The co-existence of both languages is not mere syncretism. It shapes deeply interwoven and sometime mutually contested narratives, or "the battlefield of memory" (Nelson 2008). It would be naïve to underestimate the Japanese influence in Okinawa and the complexity caused by it. It is, however, also overly simplifying to hypothesize that Japanese nationalism has changed Okinawan culture in any consistent way. As scholars have noted, songs and dances are still thought of as most representative of Okinawan culture (Sakihara 1987). By focusing on dance I hope to reveal the Okinawan struggle for identity in a way different from, say, a study of language and history, and in addition to convey a sense of dynamism to the notion, discourse and practices of the body and self.

To reflect the "colonized" reality on Okinawa and facilitate my argument, I will use the Japanese notions such as *minitsukeru* 身に付ける (to attach to the body), a term used to evaluate a dancer's progress and embodying techniques, to examine how the process of embodying transforms the performed self through culturally patterned bodily practices. *Minitsukeru* can also be defined as "making a dance one's own," an explanation of it provided by one of my informants in Taketomi. Among the main issues addressed below are how Okinawans strive to make a dance their own and what aesthetic and social ef-

10 "Annexed" is the term used by the US historian Kerr (1958). The Japanese give a different account of this historical process. It has been called *Ryūkyū shobun* 琉球處分 (the disposition of Ryūkyū) which was an elaborately planned three-stage maneuver, carried out between 1872 and 1879, that transformed the kingdom into a Japanese prefecture. Accordingly, when the US government's control of Okinawa, which was started after the Second World War, ended and Japan's governance resumed in 1972, this transfer was called "returning" (復歸) in Japan.

fects can be achieved through the dance process. Dancers (*odoriko*) are conceptualized here as a category of social agent. I will also focus on the social recognition of dancers and the transformative process of self-identification most dancers go through in contemporary society. These observations are based in my fieldwork trips to Taketomi Island between June 1993 and October 2009.¹¹

Taketomi is a small island at the base of the coral reef that spreads under some of the southern Ryūkyū Islands. The Ryūkyū Islands, located between Japan, China, and Taiwan, are four groups of islands, from north to south: Amami 奄美, Okinawa 沖縄, Miyako 宮古, and Yaeyama 八重山. The Amami Islands are administered by Japan's Kagoshima and Okinawa prefectures. The geographical location of Okinawa and its extremely limited fertile land has historically contributed to its political subordination; the historical course of its contacts made Okinawa "the recipient of multiple cultural influences" (Hokama 1986: 8).

Until it absorbed those cultural influences from its controllers, China and Japan, the core component of Okinawan society was a belief in *utaki* 御嶽 or *on*, "the sacred grove." Belief in *utaki/on* combines animism and the belief in sacred places. In Okinawa, religious belief was closely related with the notion of female superiority and institutionalized in priestess offices that were structurally parallel to those held by male chiefs for the centuries prior to the united Ryūkyū Kingdom. The sacred grove structure was legitimized in an origin myth in which two sibling gods, Shinerikyo and Amamikyo, were sent from heaven and gave birth to three children: a son who became the first king, a daughter who became the first priestess, and a younger son who became the commoner. The name Amamikyo has been traced to both the northern island group of Amami and an ancient class of Kyūshū fishermen called *amabe* (Hokama 1986).

According to the anthology of songs known as *Omorosōshi* ("weed paper of thoughts"), priestesses were the first to dance in front of shrines to communicate with the spirits. This practice of dancing with spirits later became institutionalized in the king's palace, where males took over the duty of singing and dancing for the gods. Okinawan royal artists such as Tamagusuku Chōkun 玉城朝薫 created a genre of classical dance in the eighteenth century. Those performed to entertain Chinese ambassadors were categorized as *ukwanshin udui*. 御冠船舞踊 (dances of ships that carry honorable officials). During this period, sacred and secular dances and their dancers were distinguished, with

11 In addition to a whole-year-round fieldwork from 1998 to 1999 that accomplished my doctoral research, I have been visiting the Island during various ritualistic occasions in the past 15 years, which accumulated approximately to hundreds of days altogether.

performances of each the exclusive domain of males according to social divisions within the aristocratic system. The male monopoly of classical dance as a part of elite culture lasted until 1879, when the Japanese annexed the kingdom and the aristocracy was eliminated. From that point forward, trained performers were forced to teach and perform publicly in order to earn a living. Soon dance performances were being presented in commercial theatres, and folk elements such as faster music and popular themes were added. Those who survived the transition recalled the strict training aristocratic artists had received.

With the gradual popularization of *bushi uta* 節歌 (versed songs accompanied by the three-string lute) and dance performances came increased female participation. A dance instructor from Taketomi Island once explained that females at first were not allowed to dance publicly, although some continued to study and dance in secret. According to Kamei (1988), females often danced to entertain officers from the Ryūkyū Kingdom who were assigned to the local administrative offices. Many of these performers became mistresses of the officers, but with few exceptions, they did not accompany those men at the end of their posting. For this reason, many local dances still portray scenes of separation between an aristocratic male and a local female. Females were able to openly learn and perform the dances after World War II, and today become the large majority of both professional and amateur dancers. Since dancing is now considered a significant element of social gatherings such as birthday and wedding celebrations, some dancers are able to devote themselves to dance full-time, a change that has sharply altered social networking and mobility for women in contemporary Okinawa.¹²

Taketomian Dancers: Contested and Negotiated Identities

The Okinawan dance as a cultural system embraces different genres including the ritualistic, the classical (古典), the folk (雑踊) and modern creative dances (創作舞踊).¹³ In addition to holding meaning in terms of style, these categories also reflect the social composition of hierarchies among different groups of social actors. For instance, the

12 One occasion from which dance is excluded is the mourning period.

13 This classification system has been provided by Yano (1988). I shall argue, however, that it is largely an artificial system for a specific purpose rather than an indigenous categorization, and hence these categories cannot be seen as mutually exclusive. In Taketomi even dances in the biggest annual ritual are mixtures and juxtapositions of different genres.

inhabitants of Taketomi, a tiny coral island with few natural resources, have maintained a strong tradition of dances brought by various Okinawan immigrants and exiled elites prior to the Japanese annexation. Therefore, dance practices in Taketomi are uniquely embedded in Ryūkyū history.¹⁴

Although island culture includes certain southern elements (e.g., the customs of tattooing and eating betel nut), Taketomian oral tradition suggests a clear northern connection. According to one legend, a Taketomi clan is described as being descended from a Japanese soldier from the Hei family (平家) who escaped to Okinawa after losing a battle in the late twelfth century.¹⁵ However, the generally accepted story among Taketomi islanders is that six chiefs migrated from Okinawa and Amami to their current home approximately six hundred years ago, bringing with them all of their clansmen and ancestral spirits.¹⁶ The name Taketomi comes from the name of one of the chiefs, Takanedono. The chiefs, who are said to have imported important agricultural and iron casting skills, are still worshipped by their descendants and can be viewed as the cultural importers who made the island Okinawan.

Parallel with the male chieftdom is the office of female priestess. Until very recently, all *tsukasa* (priestesses) were chosen from these six *mutuya* (houses of origin). The relationship between the six legendary chiefs and the six *on* (*utaki* is called *on* in Taketomi) they built was identified following the archaeological excavation of abandoned village sites. It is now believed that the six earliest immigrant groups were in a state of constant rivalry due to the scarcity of water, land, and other resources. The exhaustion of the wells is thought to be the primary reason for which villages were abandoned over the past six centuries. The clans eventually merged into two large groups, *Hazama* (in the northern part of the island) and *Naji* (in the southern part). Approximately thirty years ago, the *Hazama* village had grown so large it further divided into two parts—Ainota and Innota. Today's Taketomian public affairs are mostly decided by the residents of the three villages, who elect a leader called *kominkanchō* (chief of the *kominkan* [citizen center]) once every two years. Since the leader comes from one of the three villages, the other two elect their own representatives (*shūji*). These three main and a number of sub-chiefs are charged with handling all public affairs.

14 Archaeological evidence shows that Miyako and Yaeyama, together called Sakishima, "the forward islands," present different cultural aspects from those of northern Okinawa, and this supports the idea of influences from southern China.

15 Similar legends about the left heir of Hei family and his fleeing to the southern islands can be heard on other islands of Okinawa.

16 These oral traditions include the prayers of the priestesses, which are in the archaic form of dialect.

Taketomians still divide themselves into six groups of "clan children" called *ujiko*, with clan assignment decisions made immediately after a person's birth. The principle by which individuals are delegated to clans is straightforward, but there are deviations under certain circumstances. Most children automatically become part of the *ujiko* of their parents' *on*. If the parents belong to different *on*, sons attend the father's *on* and daughters the mother's. On occasion all children inherit their father's place with one exception, the oldest daughter. Rules can also be bent for reasons such as sickness or natural disasters (Yamashita 1992).

Muyama represent religious sub-groups among villages and families, and below *muyama* there are the categories of *on* of individuals. Year of birth determines the *on* one serves, based on the Chinese zodiac system of twelve animals and their celestial directions.¹⁷ Some *on* are served based on specific events in the past, such as a member of one family having saved the life of a member of another family. Every Taketomian has to worship in at least six *on*: two personal *on* according to year of birth, one or more family *on*, one clan *on* (*muyama*), and one related to some special personal attribute—for example, occupation. It is not unusual for a Taketomian to have seven or more *on*.

The *on* system and associated ritual practices are major features of Okinawan religion (Lebra 1966). Every *kami* (*on* god) has a specific function, such as protecting travelers, ensuring good crops, protecting fishermen, watching over fire, exorcizing illness, bringing prosperity, granting wisdom, and so on. Even the six major ancestral spirits (*muyama*) are bestowed with specific functions. This system constitutes a universe in which Taketomians stand at the center. One of the dance masters in Taketomi described the relation between the *on kami* and *ningen* in the Taketomian context:

Those Taketomians who migrated to Tokyo became Tokyoians and are not like Taketomians anymore. Here, you have the *on* surrounding you, and the gods protect you. If you live here, you are surrounded by the *on* and the gods. Then you become a Taketomian.¹⁸

In addition to the traditional socio-religious system, multi-layered social organizations penetrate all aspects of Taketomian social life beyond the family: *kominkan* manage island-wide affairs; *shūra* are oriented toward tribal affairs; and *on/ujiko* cut across tribal boundaries to organize clans along genealogical lines. There are dance repertoires that

17 See Ouwenhand for a clear explanation of this zodiac system of directions (1985: 8-9).

18 Quoted from Interview transcription.

correspond with each of these *shūroku*. Taketomians are allowed to dance together at all-island celebrations such as a school anniversary, but they never exchange repertoires performed for traditional rituals. Being a Taketomian dancer means being categorized according to subgroups—primarily tribes—since for all practical purposes, the community is sustained by cooperation (*utsugumi*) among the three tribes.

Taketomi's largest annual ritual, *tanadui* 種取祭, provides the best opportunity for examining dancer categorization. *Tanadui* (to get the seed) is a nine-day ritual complex held on auspicious days in the ninth or tenth lunar month. It is rooted in the centrality of harvest for the continuity of a patriarchal and hierarchical society. Although a ritual of the same name can be found throughout Okinawa, in Taketomi it is more clearly embedded in local history and the micro-politics of the villages and families. The most remarkable event is the two days of performance that feature nearly seventy drama and dance programs. Every year the priestesses and village heads gather to confirm the precise dates for *tanadui* events. Since the island no longer relies on agriculture for subsistence, religious and political leaders choose the dates based on other practical reasons and the Chinese zodiac sixty-day cycle the islanders follow. Two dates met all the requirements in 1998, one in October and one in December; the earlier date was chosen because of warmer weather and the fact that performances would fall on a weekend. In 2000 the ritual was held in November because of concerns about hot weather on the other dates (in September) and proximity to other events such as *kitsugansai* 結願祭 (the ritual of tying wishes to the deities).

Performers are decided upon and dance rehearsals begin one month before the ritual. The program, which is also divided among the three tribes, consists of all the classical pieces a Taketomian is expected to know. Thus, the first criterion in choosing the program is the concept of tradition. To the present day, mostly classical and more ritualistic Taketomian dances and dramas are those performed at *tanadui*. A Taketomian once told me, as we watched a newly composed dance performed to music composed in a new style by a young local musician, that it was regrettable this dance could not be performed at *tanadui*, even though the song was very popular and the dance was acceptable in terms of quality. To agree on a program for *tanadui* is to agree on what represents Taketomian culture. Even more challenging is deciding which dancers should perform specific pieces. One *shishō* (dance master) said, "You can almost tell if the dance will succeed or fail once you know who the dancer is. If an instructor is not able to arrange suitable dancers for each dance, he cannot be called a *shishō*." Since few islanders are professional dancers, making appropriate selections for certain pieces entails prolonged negotiation centering on ability and availability. Some female villagers hesitate to participate; mothers of young babies are excluded because of their duties, as are those who have recently ex-

perienced the death of a relative.¹⁹ I heard stories of older children interfering with their mothers' desire to participate even though their fathers were supportive.

Single women, married women without children, widows, and other women who have never married are always among the first to be considered as performers. However, the task of selecting performers is becoming more difficult as the population gets smaller, mostly due to the movement of young people off the island. The pressure to choose increases due to the personal pride many islanders take in the dances. Such pressure can lead to tension between performers and organizers. One villager complained that she had to perform seven pieces in one day, with some costume changes so complex that in one case she had to wear one costume underneath another. Taketomians have responded to the shortage of personnel by reducing the age limit for performers and allowing younger boys and girls to participate. Owing to the fact that the repertoire of established Okinawan dance has a hierarchy in which specific dances are performed by specific age groups or characters, it is not difficult to select suitable pieces for the young. However, their availability is in turn limited by school and extracurricular activities, especially among junior high school students. If they do participate, it is usually for only one or two pieces that may be practiced after school hours.

People moving to the island from other areas serve as another source of performers. Continuing in-migration is moving the geographically independent island closer to "the other world"—Ishigaki, Okinawa, Tokyo, and so on. New arrivals appear motivated to acculturate to Taketomian life, meaning that distinctions between Taketomians and non-Taketomians are becoming increasingly difficult to draw but are still under constant negotiation. For those who have moved off the Island, their status can be very complex, especially in terms of performing traditional arts in the more urbanized framework. All dance instructors on Taketomi at one time or another expressed concern with how professional dance teachers, mainly in Ishigaki, have rearranged dances from the island's repertoire for stage performance. These indigenous instructors, who were amateur but had inherited knowledge and status in the island milieu, viewed themselves as protecting a tradition at risk of change and misrepresentation by their professional counterparts, despite the fact that many of the professions were themselves Taketomians. On one oc-

19 The rule is becoming flexible and context-driven. In the case of *tanadui*, it is strictly observed that a villager in mourning is not allowed to perform. On other occasions, however, a compromise may be possible and it is up to the individual to decide what to do. For instance, conventionally villagers do not dance if there has been recent death among their relatives. In one case a female villager was still invited to perform, but she refused at first. To persuade her, the organizer said "Your relative loves dance herself. She will be considerate."

casion I heard a villager complained that a dance teacher who had moved away from her village was using hand movements from the traditional repertoire in contemporary choreography. Most of the villagers I spoke with insisted that dances performed during the rituals should not be performed on stage, even by Taketomians. For practical reasons—basically, there are not enough islanders to support two intensive days of performances—in-migrants and professional dance teachers with Taketomian origins are being accepted as legitimate *tanadui* performers, with their programs set to reflect the villages they came from. Outside of *tanadui*, regular performances of drama and dance are limited to current island residents.

Outsiders—in-migrants not of Taketomi origin—have only very recently been viewed as a supplemental source of performers. In addition to outsiders married to Taketomians and schoolteachers who are transferred to the island, a significant number of newcomers are showing an interest in Taketomian culture.²⁰ In addition to pursuing that interest to work in local guesthouses or act as tourist guides, some are making an effort to learn traditional skills such as weaving, *samisen* 三味線 playing, and dancing.²¹ Locals are happy to have the extra help serving food and donated labor for social activities. After a time, outsiders may become so immersed in their daily Taketomian lives that it is difficult to distinguish them from locals. Whether or not that welcoming attitude should be extended to *tanadui* participation—considered a cultural display of the island's collective history and an occasion for the public examination of the dancers' collective identity—is an ongoing debate among villagers.

***Kachiashi*: Cultural Body, Natural Technique**

Okinawans like to say that their children learn how to dance before they learn how to walk. Most Okinawan children have many opportunities to witness bodily expression in different forms. In the case of Taketomians, children experience physical movement in dances or dramas performed at annual religious rituals, weddings, birthday celebrations, and many other social gatherings and rites of passage. Most Taketomian children are

20 According to Japanese official policy, the teachers and civil servants are transferred to different regions or positions every three years, to avoid bureaucratic corruption.

21 *Samisen* is the three-stringed lute brought to Okinawa, and later to Japan, from China. Traditionally, the body of the instrument was covered with snake skin, which distinguished the Okinawan *samisen* from the Japanese ones. Due to the scarcity of snake and the expense of repair, this cover has been replaced by artificial skin and old snake skin *samisen* have become quite valuable.

encouraged to perform in front of others; their culture provides an encouraging environment reminiscent of that depicted by Mead (1928) in Samoa. From the beginning of life, family-centered acculturation contributes to the particulars of the children's movements. Any time young children hear a *samisen* being played, they begin to imitate the adults by twisting their wrists. Whenever children perform this *kachiashi*—a movement pattern consisting of a loose form of wrist motion accompanied by steps—they always get appreciative applause from adults.

Kachiashi is now considered characteristic of Okinawan performance. It is most frequently performed as the finale of a group dance at social gatherings. The *samisen* musicians play a certain melody at a fast tempo, and the dancers begin twisting their wrists. Everyone has her or his own style of *kachiashi*. Some dancers give displays of ecstasy as the tempo speeds up toward a final climax. For most Okinawan children, *kachiashi* is their first lesson in Okinawan movement, so that by the time they become toddlers, they are able to perform it naturally whenever they hear the right music. Outsiders often hesitate to practice *kachiashi* in front of others. I have heard residents from Tokyo with several years' experience playing *shamisen* and dancing in the Yaeyama style describe *kachiashi* as "the most difficult movement in Okinawan dance." On many other occasions I've heard similar comments from in-migrants to the Taketomi, including wives who are not of Taketomian origin; in other words, they have neither the disposition nor the *habitus* of children born and raised on the island. A dance instructor I interviewed described the difference in terms of "a Taketomian body":

The population is decreasing, there are only a few island people left. But there are many girls who are marrying in from outside. They don't know anything about the culture of the island. They haven't heard the music before, they haven't seen dance like this before. As adults they have hard heads; it's not easy to teach them. However, the second or third generation children who are born here, they have listened to the music since birth, and their movement (*ugoki*) is the same as the island people. They are the same as the island children. When they are taught to dance, they remember it in their bodies, not in their heads.²²

But even some native Taketomian children are having trouble learning to dance due to outside influences. Until very recently, teaching children to dance wasn't considered necessary. One adult told me a story that I heard from many others: "When I was three, I

22 Quoted from Interview transcription.

started to dance in the yard, while I was playing. Children always learned when they were playing.” Taketomians generally agree that the best way to embody a dance is through repetitive bodily practice. As villager who used to teach dance stated, “Kids can learn very quickly, even with music that they are not familiar with at all. The first, second time, maybe they ask ‘Huh? Huh?’ But by the fourth time they can do it.”

According to another dance master, however, this “natural” process of learning to dance is being challenged:

You see, now the children always play with computers after school. They do not move anymore. *Geino* [performing arts] have become specialized. It was never specialized in the past, every child copied what it had seen the adults doing. They stepped into dance easily, there was little to be taught. Now you have to teach them everything, from the very beginning!²³

A generation gap is also appearing in terms of attitudes toward authority—including dance teachers. Almost all of the village-based instructors I spoke with commented on this difference when describing their own learning experiences and those of the younger generation:

In the past, it was more difficult to be chosen as a dancer who could perform in the *tanadui*. Simply learning to dance was a big occasion, you had to make a big effort to convince a teacher to teach you. We had to prepare plates full of delicious foods, and our parents would lead us to the teacher and bow very honorably. Nowadays the situation has changed greatly. The younger generation does not appreciate your effort. It is like you’re not giving them something but begging them to learn.²⁴

The issue goes beyond who has the appropriate body for dancing. From the viewpoint of contemporary Okinawans, physical training is only one small part of embodying dance, especially classical dance. As another instructor explained it, the lack of “soul” has made dance instruction more difficult:

The body (*karada*) of a human being is the same as its form (*katachi*). In it there is the soul (*tamashi*). If there is no content (*nakami*) in it, then it’s empty (*kara*).

23 Quoted from Interview transcription.

24 Quoted from Interview transcription.

Therefore, when the human being is dead, the body *is empty* (*kara da*).²⁵

This statement sounds like another body-soul dichotomy. This arises from the subtle variances of Japanese. The Japanese language contains two major representations of the body: *karada* 體 and *mi* 身, both considered indigenous Japanese vernaculars. *Karada* usually refers to the physical dimension of the body, such as *karada no choshiga waru'i desu*, which means “the condition of the body is bad.” On the other hand, *mi* refers to the body in a more holistic way, such as expressed through the term *minitsukeru*, “to attach to the body.” *Minitsukeru* not only describes a physical ability, but also the whole body as a perceiving and moving agent as in dancing. The term *nakami* 中身 (the main body, the content) also points to the substantial nature of the body, without which the form cannot sustain. The body, if only its physical dimension is emphasized, becomes empty or machine-like for the spirit to occupy.

Beside this abstract conceptualization, people in Taketomi also developed a system of anatomical metonyms. The head (*atama* 頭) is a locus of intelligence (e.g., memory). The heart (*kokoro* 心) is for affection and feelings, as in the phrase, “we humans speak different languages, but we have only one heart”—a metaphor for co-operation and sharing often heard in Taketomian discourses. Limbs are considered the most important body parts and the first signs of human existence. Accordingly, a villager will tell a visitor, “When a baby is born, only after its hands (*te* 手) and feet (*ashi* 足) are seen to be normal can the parents relax.”

The movements of the limbs are also the primary means by which *odoriko*’s mastery of dance is measured. When Taketomians pray to their *kami* before a performance, they always pray for “no mistakes with hands and feet.” When describing how dancers co-operate, Taketomians use expressions such as “their hands are matching” or “their feet do not match.” Still, dance also involves other parts of the body, and so the term *minitsukeru* is always emphasized by dance instructors. *Minitsukeru* highlights the multi-sensory characteristics of kinesthetic experiences (e.g., seeing, listening, practicing, and remembering) that are associated with different body parts. *Minitsukeru* is considered the final goal of this multi-sensory process.

The term *tamashi'i*—clearly a Japanese concept—can be translated as “soul” or “spirit,” depending on the context. One of the strongest applications of this term occurred during the late period of Second World War, when Japanese Kamikaze 神風 pilots will-

25 Quoted from Interview transcription..

ingly sacrificed their bodies to prove their patriotism and to be rewarded in the afterlife; hence it carries a sense of transcendence and immortality, which is often seen as opposed to the corruption of materiality. The idea of a Taketomian *tamashi'i* is promoted whenever villagers find it necessary to reinforce identity and unity—for instance, during competitions. The Okinawan instructor's use of the Japanese concept of “soul” is more a comment on changing social relationships, rather than the real essence of the body. This particular concept has a strong Japanese connotation and emphasizes a special Japanese idea of the relation between spirit and physique as discussed above. It has been broadly applied across the performing arts such as Japanese dance: students must still perform many services for their masters—serving tea, cleaning the floor, and the like—before they are considered ready to start training. The purpose of such actions is to ensure that the dancers' souls, the content of the body, meet highly valued ethic/aesthetic standards. Foucault (1991 [1977]) has commented on this discipline of the body as a micro scheme of a power-oriented machinery:

Rather than seeing this soul as the reactivated remnants of an ideology, one would see it as the present correlative of a certain technology of power over the body. It would be wrong to say that the soul is an illusion, or an ideological effect. On the contrary, it exists, it has a reality, it is produced permanently around, on, within the body by the functioning of a power that is exercised on those ... [that] one supervises, trains, and corrects, over ... children at home and at school, the colonized ... This is the historical reality of this soul, which, unlike the soul represented by Christian theology, is not born in sin and subject to punishment, but is born rather out of methods of punishment, supervision and constraint. [Foucault 1991 [1977]: 29]

According to Foucault, the non-corporal soul is nonetheless a reality—that is, a “soul” inhabits a person and brings that person to existence—itself a factor in the mastery that power exercises over the body. The soul is the effect and instrument of a political anatomy, “the prison of the body” (Foucault 1991 [1977]: 30). Foucault's notion is applicable to examining general body disciplines in Taketomian daily life, and dancing specifically. The “natural technique” of a young Taketomian child expresses the transmission of collective memories, blended with a restrained and colonized history embodied over many generations. As Butler (1990) observed:

As an intentionally organized materiality, the body is always an embodying of possibilities both conditioned and circumscribed by historical convention. In other

words, the body is a historical situation, as Beauvoir has claimed, and is a manner of doing, dramatizing, and *reproducing* a historical situation. [Butler 1990: 272, italics original]

***Akamma*: Dancing and the Technique of Self/Selves**

One important technique in Okinawan classical dance involves order and control, marked by stable beats of medium speed. This is true even though following an ordered time was never a feature in the original style of Okinawan popular dance, which emerged from communal situations such as social gatherings after agricultural labor, rituals, and recreation. Using *kachiashi* as an example, the continuous hand movements are performed at a *rubato* tempo, so the form of expression is free. It is still popularly performed among many Okinawans at various social occasions. A Taiwanese who has been living in Ishigaki for fifty years described *kachiashi* dancing this way: "They look like they are crazy, these Yaeyama people. If people hear the sound of a *samisen* on the street, they immediately gather and start dancing."

Another aspect of Okinawan dance practice is gender ideology, which is not only reflected in labor divisions in performance, but also internalized in the gendered world of the dance. Okinawan presentational dance is exclusively a character dance. As a dancing body, the performer always carries gendered property, with gendered features manifested in a classification system that includes dances for youth, males, females, and the elderly. Gendered movement in Okinawan dances can be analyzed in terms of foot positions and movement quality. For instance, male dancers usually stand in an open position—that is, with legs opened shoulder-width and the feet turned out. This position is never seen among female dancers, who instead hold their feet in a "T" position whenever a static posture is presented. A second example is the *Akamma bushi*, which is performed by both males and females. At many celebrations I have watched men and women dancing *Akamma bushi* together as the opening piece of a performance. The man usually presents his arms in a manner that implies a greater quality of opening compared to the constraint shown by women. Male dancers also punctuate each movement, while females emphasize stability and flow.

Other gendered differences in Okinawan dance are either subtle, abstract, or a combination of the two. When asked to explain the difference between male and female dances, one teacher replied:

Well, the female dance is elegant. You must express femininity (*onarashisa*). To be the character is to dance beautifully, because it is the female dance. Moreover, the gaze of the dancer is not raised. It must be lowered a bit. Even when it flows upward, keep it as gentle (*yasashii*) as possible. That is the difference. In the male dance, the performer must be magnificent (*dōdō*). If a piece is not danced magnificently, it does not become a male dance.²⁶

Divisions between female and male bodies on the stage are especially pointed in classical dance performances. Here it will be useful to clarify the different genres of dances practiced in Taketomi, such as “the classical” and “the folk.” Each took shape under different historical and social conditions and therefore manifest a very different *class habitus*. Briefly, the first genre consists of presentational dances, including Okinawan and Yaeyama dances. With roots in the court tradition, Okinawan classical dance has its own specific habitual body. The presentational dance in Yaeyama was developed by government officials who received aristocratic training. This training was influenced by Chinese Confucianism in that it emphasized such skills as reading and writing, literature, music, and dance. It was through training of the body that virtues such as obedience and self-control were achieved. The training of the body was apparently aimed at producing the virtue of loyalty, which was critical to the survival of the kingdom’s hierarchical structure. The most extreme example is the Kinō Rui 勤王流 (the Kinō School), in which the concept of loyalty was expressed through twenty-two different bodily gestures.

Movement speed is also considered a characteristic that distinguishes classical from folk dances, with the latter done at much faster tempos. Thus, divisions between classical and folk dance genres reflect codes rooted in the habitual bodies of various social origins: between male and female and between aristocrats and peasants. These divisions have both synchronic and diachronic implications: they mark differences among groups co-existing in the same period, and they reflect a totality of notions inscribed on bodies from the past that can only be memorized in bodies of the present. The re-enactment of dances that carry specific habitual memory becomes the “commemorative ceremonial” (Connerton 1989). Participants simultaneously appropriate or moderate their notions of the body, all of which bear historical and social inscriptions that are separate from those of their predecessors.

26 Quoted from Interview transcription..

Taketomians find themselves crossing various social boundaries to embody categories of movements that they do not usually practice. However, the outcome of this process leads to achievement that blurs aesthetic and cultural merits and attracts younger apprentices—even those who are new to island life. The practice of representing specific characters in dance makes manifest the transformative process of *minitsukeru*. What is embodied is not only the form and technique of a cultural bearer, but also a special Taketomian self—note the number of new Taketomians attending modern private dance institutes. The institutionalization of local dance extends its cultural practice into a wider social process, in which dancing as a “technique of self/selves” (Hughes-Freeland 1998: 3) is magnified.

I would like to use my own experience as an example. When I first expressed an interest in Yaeyama dance to someone I had just met, she told me, “You must learn *akamma bushi*, *shimanutuli*, and *kunara*.” These three dances, which are a type of initiation for dance students, are thought to contain all the basics of Yaeyama dances. Those basics objectify a set of procedures that prepare dancers for entry into “the world of Okinawan dances,” a world of practice that demands more time and concentration than most non-professional dancers can afford. Beginners in private dance institutes usually start with a walking practice called *oriashi* 摺足 (folding the feet), an obvious Japanese influence in classical Okinawan dance. To facilitate this flowing movement, which is favored in Japanese classical dance and was adopted by Okinawans, dancers need to keep their waists (the locus of gravity) low throughout the dance, while arms are held to form an arch to the front. Being able to assume and hold this position is considered prerequisite for a dancer. To help new students practice this posture, they are often given fans to use as props. None of the positions can be considered “natural” insofar as daily physical actions are concerned; therefore doing them correctly demands considerable practice and concentration. My own experience of learning the beginning piece of *akamma bushi* revealed the need to constantly maintain self-control and restraint to achieve the ideal posture and movement. The effort required is so great that by the end of the first week of class I suffered acute backache. I was not alone in this experience: one Taketomian admitted that she was not a good dancer because she could not keep her waist low, an action that she described as tiring and even painful.

The process of mastering basic postures can be viewed as a ritualization process in which social agents manipulate their bodies to interact with their outer environment to create a differentiation that they consider significant. Dancers are usually strong in terms of their ritual commitment, in the sense that enacting ritual means acceptance of an obligation and established conventions (Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994; Rappaport 1999). In the disciplinary system of professional Japanese dances, acceptance of obliga-

tion and commitment to convention are considered pre-requisites—as mentioned above, new students often perform daily chores for their masters until they are considered ready for training (Sellers-Young 1993). Hughes-Freeland (1997) offers an elaborate theory of Javanese dancing in which the socio-centric Javanese consciousness connects “movement, manners and identity” and in which “values within performance are congruent with those applied to general social performances.” Accordingly, dance movement “is not simply a stylization of everyday movement but a ‘sample’ of other movements, enacted at a number of removes from them.” She suggests that the Javanese consider dance movement a moral practice “leading to the possibility of socialization into the proper Javanese way of behaving” (Hughes-Freeland 1997: 57, 59).

To a degree, these ideas have resonance in Okinawan society. Okinawans also favor self-control during social interactions, and therefore can be defined as “sociocentric.” Okinawan society values the performing arts, and to practice indigenous dance is to be socialized as a good Okinawan. This attitude can be traced to an aristocratic past, as in the Javanese case, wherein dancing is a form of self-control that constitutes a sociologically particular Okinawan “way of knowing oneself and others” (Hughes-Freeland 1997: 57). As one dance master in Taketomi commented, dancing help her “connect with others well.” Javanese dancing is supported by an elaborate system of cultural philosophy, of which there is no equivalent among Okinawans. Nevertheless, the Okinawan technologies of self/selves are revealed from the process of embodied movement—the process of learning dances for professional purposes magnifies a transformation of self-other relationships in terms of a dancer’s physicality and mentality.

In today’s professional studios, dancers no longer dance for gods or kings. Moving before large mirrors, the dancers see only themselves. Movements are based on self-measured space rather than in relation to others. As a Taketomian dance master forcefully argues, to achieve perfect presence, dancers must adjust their movements, some as subtle as raising an eye, according to their individual physicality. The selfness of the dancer is strongly perceived during the continuous process of learning (see Sellers–Young 1993 for the Japanese case).

As noted above, the classical style features an economy of movement; in some dances it seems that the performers are not moving at all. These dances are based on the Japanese cultural aesthetic of *ma* (space in time), which highlights the presence of the body instead of its movement. This style of dance is considered extremely difficult, therefore only experienced and advanced dancers are sanctioned to perform it. In addition to skillful self-control, these dancers must maintain a balance between the energy of the movement and their static presence. The beautiful presence of the dancer is achieved though the careful measurement of time and space by a confident self. Self-control, self-

balance, and measuring space and time are all critical social skills in Okinawan society, mostly learned not by verbal transmission, but by the embodiment of particular forms of movement. In the process of learning these movements, the technologies of self/selves advance, accompanied by the formation of a consciousness, "the aesthetic morality" (Hughes-Freeland 1997: 55).

Conclusion: From *Odoriko* to *Yaninchu*

Just a few weeks before my fieldwork ended in 1999, I went to Ishigaki to observe a Sunday morning class in a dance studio. Several young women were breast-feeding their babies during a break; two of the baby girls had been born around the time of *tanadui*, which had been held several months prior. Hence, these women had not been expected to perform during the ritual. The students all lived in Taketomi, although none of them had Taketomian origins. Only one student was single and without any dependents, but during the previous year, five of the other women had given birth. Many of my informants expressed pleasure at this exciting increase in population, saying, "Now we have more *odoriko* for *tanadui*!" The class had been specifically organized for these mothers, who were encouraged to bring their infants. Otherwise, it would have been very difficult to attend training that required regular attendance. Their practice was encouraged by an older woman who used to be the dance instructor—she wanted these young women to embrace the dances and prepare for future *tanadui* performances.

Starting with the basic *akamma bushi*, some of the young mothers showed great potential, and concentrated as hard as they could on the teacher's instruction. The instructor understood the students' motivation because she had also in-migrated to become the wife of a Taketomian. As she nudged her students through the repeated process of *akamma bushi* she told them, "During the first time, you listen carefully. Then the second time you watch. Think over the movements the third time. Then the fourth time you can do it."

What impressed me the most was the role that the dance instructor played during the practice. She sometimes helped hold the babies while supervising their mothers' movement. She would also comment on the babies, noting their close resemblance to their parents, a comment based on established social relationships. Regarding the mothers, they not only gathered to dance, but also to exchange accounts of their lives and experiences as new Taketomian wives or mothers during breaks. In the process of physical study they become recognized as *odoriko* (dancers), and solidified their mutual identity as *yaninchu* (family), substantially and metaphorically.

The social recognition and processes of embodiment among dancers in Okinawa are linked on several levels. Dance achieves a dialogic and dynamic interaction between the individual and the social through physical enactment in a culturally meaningful way. In the absence of metaphysical systems of knowledge and movement techniques such as those found in Noh theatre or the European ballet, Taketomian dancers constantly polish their “self-techniques” through their connections with people broadly considered their *yaninchu*. Striving to become a *odoriko* entails pursuing an evolving categorization of self-identity and social recognition. The achievement of *minitsukeru* transforms dancers and equips them with techniques that can be applied socially as well as on stage. By dancing in the corporeal dimension, the social agent accomplishes aesthetic achievement and the transformation of physicality and mentality.

How does anthropology benefit from studies of the body? Unlike anthropological studies of other fields, the body has an existence itself. It is not social construction or ideational realization of other cultural domains such as economy, politics, religion, law, art and so on. It has an autonomous presence, even though Western philosophers have tended to ignore it in favor of its representation. One fact we cannot escape from is that the body is owned by everyone, including the researcher and the researched. Interaction, reading, and signifying the body necessarily construct intersubjectivity between the researcher and the researched, who are brought into each other’s fields of relation, in which “no [human being] perceives except on condition of being a self of movement” (Merleau-Ponty 1968: 257, quoted in Farnell and Varela 2008: 216).

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「動態體現」： 舞動中，化人以成文

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本文乃是以沖繩南部竹富島島民的民族誌研究為例，藉由突顯舞蹈所涉及的動態身體與變化社會過程，反省「體現」此一概念所具有的社會性本質。

延續 Farnell 與 Varela 所提出的「動態體現」之觀點，以此出發理解「動」的身體之為「化人的成文之道」；以及日本哲學中的「人間」等概念，筆者分析竹富島島民舞動的體現過程，引領他們貫穿幾種不同關於群體的文化範疇：從 *uchina* 沖繩人、*odoriko* 踊子 / 舞者，到 *yaninchu* 家人。藉由對「動態體現」的考量，筆者提議成為「竹富島人」的重要變化過程，以及在一獨特之文化世界中的自我——社會存在，不論是在原生的島民或外來者身上，可以透過像舞動這般的身體實踐予以理解。

關鍵詞：「動態體現」，身體，舞蹈，竹富島，*minitsuleru*（身に付ける）
