

# Introduction

## Toward a Critical East Asian Dance Studies

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When wealthy people died in ancient China, their tombs were filled with objects representing things the deceased were thought to need in the after-life. Statues of servants, horses and chariots, writing tools, vessels for storing food, musical instruments, and figurines of dancers are among the common items found in these heavenly entourages. Dance was something not to be without even in death.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the centuries, dance has continued to be important to people across China and neighboring Japan and Korea—the region we today call East Asia.<sup>2</sup> Performed at royal banquets, diplomatic functions, and national pageants, dance has been imbued with the power of governance and the symbolic majesty of the realm, whether that of an emperor, a colonial regime, or a nation-state. Dance has also been woven into the mundane rhythms of social life, appearing in harvest celebrations, healing rituals, courtship, after-school and corporate leisure activities, and public parks. Dance is further ubiquitous in many forms of commercial entertainment, from tourism and art festivals to television and video games. Simply put, dance is an indispensable part of the cultural life of East Asia, whether past or present, elite or popular, public or private.

Despite its importance, dance in East Asia long eluded the academic attention of Anglophone scholars, for whom in the past it often fell into cracks between established disciplines. Scholars of East Asian studies, traditionally trained in the analysis of East Asian texts, often found dance difficult to engage with because its embodied expression seemed to defy text-based interpretative methods.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, scholars of dance studies, traditionally trained in Western ballet and modern dance, often lacked the kinesthetic, linguistic, and contextual knowledge to carry out primary research on East Asian source material.<sup>4</sup> Although anthropologists sometimes conducted research on non-Western dance, such research was rare and often did not

address East Asia.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, while a vast and vibrant body of scholarship on East Asian dance has long been produced by scholars in East Asia, this research was rarely translated into English and thus remained largely inaccessible to Anglophone scholars who could not read Chinese, Korean, Japanese, or other languages in which this work was published.<sup>6</sup>

With the increased popularity of interdisciplinary methods and the rise of performance studies, along with other new fields, in the Anglophone academy at the end of the twentieth century, research in English on East Asian dance finally began to take off as a robust area of study in the 1990s.<sup>7</sup> During the last two decades, a burst of English-language academic monographs has appeared that examine, from a variety of perspectives, dance in diverse Chinese, Japanese, and Korean contexts.<sup>8</sup> Together with unpublished master's theses and doctoral dissertations, as well as published essays and article-length works, this marks the arrival of English-language East Asian dance studies as an established and rapidly growing multidisciplinary research field.

While East Asian dance studies is growing in the English-speaking academy, most books on dance in East Asia are framed around particular national or ethnolinguistic dance communities or dance forms, often treated in isolation from one another.<sup>9</sup> As the first book-length publication in English to take a regional approach to multiple forms of dance across East Asia, this volume seeks to expand the existing research by emphasizing transnational circulation, interconnections, and comparisons among different national communities and dance forms in the region. Bringing together sixteen essays by an interdisciplinary and international group of scholars based in East Asia and the United States, *Corporeal Politics: Dancing East Asia* builds on the new momentum in East Asian dance and performance research, while continuing to grow this field by taking up new themes and modeling new directions of inquiry. The concept of "corporeal politics" provides a unifying methodology for the case studies collected in this volume, which address a wide range of dance styles, time periods, and dance communities. Attending to issues such as gender, sexuality, class, race, religion, language, ethnic and national identity, imperialism, war, migration, revolution, activism, and technology, the essays in this volume each unpack the politics of bodily movement that emerge from particular bodies and choreographies located in specific places, times, and social settings.

There is no single, unifying definition of dance in East Asia. Thus, readers will encounter diverse kinds of performances examined as dance in this

book. About two-thirds of the chapters in this volume focus on concert dance—choreographies of modern, folk, contemporary, classical, and other dance styles devised for the stage and conceived of as “art dance,” distinct from theater, music, or popular performance (for examples, see Ma, Kuniyoshi, Son, Wilcox, Chen, Kim, Jiang, Chang, Mezur, and Lin). The remaining chapters examine dance in other contexts—as entertainment in private homes, in tourism and pageants, as movement sequences within operas and musicals, and in public protests (see Bossler, Yeh, Yuh, Okada, Rodman, and Yoon). The scope of dance forms and contexts discussed here is by no means exhaustive, and many important topics are not included. Overall, the volume aims to both reflect current directions in the field and introduce subjects and approaches not well represented in previous English-language scholarship. Each chapter poses some questions that are left unanswered, with the goal of initiating conversations and encouraging future research.

To frame the contents of the book, this introduction is organized into three parts. The first examines existing concepts of East Asia in area studies and considers how critical area studies methodologies can offer insights for East Asian dance studies. The second part looks at the recent critique of whiteness in dance studies and considers how anti-Orientalist approaches can inform scholarship on dance in East Asia. Finally, the third part introduces the concept of corporeal politics and explains how each section and chapter of the book addresses this theme through a different question or case study.

#### DANCING EAST ASIA: A CRITICAL AREA STUDIES APPROACH

The term “East Asia” is a recent invention with multiple origins and a fraught past. In contemporary US area studies discourse, East Asia conventionally refers to the geographic region of northeast Asia, comprising the modern-day political entities of China (including Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan), Japan, and North and South Korea.<sup>10</sup> Within Asian studies, East Asia is often distinguished from two other major regions, namely, Southeast Asia (encompassing Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Brunei, and Timor-Leste) and South Asia (encompassing India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, and sometimes Afghanistan).<sup>11</sup> While area studies scholars themselves often contest the usefulness and legitimacy of these regional categories, they nevertheless continue to have meaning as organizing structures for academic research and

teaching. This contemporary US academic definition of East Asia forms the starting point for our conceptualization of this book and of the broader field of East Asian dance studies in the Anglophone context.

There are several historical premises for this definition of East Asia, each of which lends different political and cultural significance to the term today. In its oldest and most basic use, East Asia marks what was once understood as the sphere of Chinese cultural influence in Asia. If expanded to include Mongolia, Vietnam, and some other parts of Southeast Asia, the region designated today as East Asia roughly corresponds to places where, over a period of nearly two millennia, the Chinese writing system and cultural practices such as Confucianism were adopted by local governments and, to varying degrees, incorporated into average people's daily lives.<sup>12</sup> By around the fifth century CE, both Korea and Japan had adopted the Chinese writing system to record their local languages. Although Korea introduced the phonetic Hangul alphabet in the 1440s, Chinese characters (known in Korean as *Hanja*) were still regularly used in Korean texts through the mid-twentieth century. In today's Japan, Chinese characters (known in Japanese as *kanji*) remain integral to the Japanese writing system, along with two other phonetic Japanese scripts, *hiragana* and *katakana*. Some aspects of Confucian culture relating to family organization, the gender system, and ethical action continue to shape life in these places despite major social change. These historical connections link East Asia even during periods of regional conflict and disunity and despite the cultural distinctness of each locality within this broader region.

Another more recent historical premise for the contemporary concept of East Asia emerged at the end of the nineteenth century, when the region was facing intense threats from the violent expansion of Western empires. For a period of time, East Asian writers used the shared term "East Asia" 東亞 (*Dongya* in Chinese, *Tōa* in Japanese, and *Dong-a* in Korean) as a self-designation, as part of new political discourses of inter-Asian solidarity, later known as Pan-Asianism.<sup>13</sup> Initially, Pan-Asianism advocated Asian unity in opposition to Western European and US hegemony and racism. It represented "the agenda of a united Asia, an Asia with a common goal—the struggle against Western imperialism."<sup>14</sup> Eventually, however, Japan developed a Westernized military and began to establish its own empire in Asia, with Japanese intellectuals often using Pan-Asianism as a nationalistic justification to invade neighboring Asian states. After Japan's colonization of Taiwan in 1895 and then annexation of the Korean peninsula in 1910, the Japanese military conquered huge parts of mainland China, Hong Kong (then a British colony), and Southeast Asia (then predominantly under British, Dutch, French, and

US control). At the height of Japanese imperial expansion, in the early 1940s, Japan's leaders promoted the concept of the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere" as an idealized image of Asia under Japanese rule.<sup>15</sup> The discourse of Pan-Asianism and its related concept of "East Asia" thus acquired the dual meanings of resistance against Western imperialism and support for the Japanese Empire. In this way, the concept of East Asia also shifted from a Sino-centric order to a Japan-centric one.

The idea of East Asia gained yet a third set of meanings after the end of World War II, when area studies emerged as a recognized discipline in the US, one that was often interpolated to serve the military-intelligence work of US Cold War imperialism.<sup>16</sup> Although the US had long been involved in Asia as an imperial and colonial power (exemplified most clearly by the US colonization of the Philippines in 1898–1946, but also by US involvement in military ventures, missionary work, scientific and technical projects, and unequal trade agreements in Asia since the 1850s), direct intervention in East Asian political affairs increased dramatically following the US entry into World War II in 1941, following the Japanese strike on Pearl Harbor. It was during this war that the US government began recruiting large numbers of East Asian studies scholars into government jobs, a practice that continued through the US-led Allied Occupation of Japan in 1945–1952, the Chinese Civil War in 1946–1949, the Korean War in 1950–1953, and the Vietnam War in 1955–1975 (hence, the term "cold" in Cold War is largely a euphemism when it comes to East and Southeast Asia).<sup>17</sup> The US objective throughout this period was to expand its own influence and suppress left-wing revolutionary movements.<sup>18</sup> In this context, the field of East Asian studies often promoted the US Cold War political agenda, based on the ideology of anticommunism. East Asia itself was imagined as a battleground between so-called "free" territories (referring to US-allied areas such as Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, largely ruled by colonial regimes or right-wing military dictatorships) and so-called "unfree" territories (referring to areas initially allied with the Soviet Union, such as China and North Korea, which had socialist governments led by communist parties). By the late 1960s, as criticisms of the Vietnam War and other aspects of US Cold War foreign policy became increasingly widespread, many US-based East Asian studies scholars questioned their own field's complicity in these activities. This launched a new period of critical East Asian studies that continues in some ways today.<sup>19</sup>

Through its organization and chapter contents, this book builds on all three above meanings of "East Asia" and their related debates in the critical area studies scholarship as they apply to dance in and from the East Asia

region. Part I, “Contested Genealogies,” explores different ways historical Chinese cultural practices established foundations for dance in the East Asia region, looking at the traditions of female entertainers, operatic performance, and religious literary motifs as three examples. Part II, “Decolonizing Migration,” looks at transnational circulations facilitated by imperialism, World War II, and post–Cold War neoliberal economic development, asking how East Asian dancers and choreographers embraced, rejected, and adapted performance forms and ideologies introduced from the West. Part III, “Militarization and Empire,” examines how dance promoted the wartime propaganda of Japanese Pan-Asianism, as well as how militarization continued to shape bodily experience in Cold War–era Taiwan after fifty years of Japanese colonialism. Part IV, “Socialist Aesthetics,” challenges the ideological legacy of US Cold War area studies, in which socialist art and culture created in the PRC and North Korea are often not taken seriously as artistic practices. Instead, it asks what communist revolutions and their aftermath contributed to dance culture in the region. Lastly, Part V, “Collective Technologies,” looks at how dancers have collectively responded to periods of intense social change in contemporary East Asia, from the anti-US protests and feminist movement in 1960s Japan, to current pro- and anti-LGBTQ activism in South Korea and the boom of digital technology in Taiwan. In all five sections, the meanings of East Asia outlined above form an immediate context for each dance being explored.

The critical turn in area studies also forms the basis for many approaches and methodologies employed in this book. Following such work, for example, the essays in this volume attend closely to intersecting colonialisms and imperialisms as structuring forces in modern East Asian cultural history, including their relationships to the unequal power structures of global capitalism and the experiences of indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities within nation-states.<sup>20</sup> This book also affirms recent scholarship that defines an essential function of area studies as the decolonization of knowledge production, by countering the persistent overrepresentation and assumed universality of the US and Europe in the traditional disciplines—including dance.<sup>21</sup> Finally, this book follows the insights of critical area studies by reflecting on power structures that undergird knowledge production about East Asia, recognizing that these may include pressures from East Asian governments themselves. As critical area studies scholars have pointed out, the rapid growth of East Asian economies during the latter decades of the twentieth century, combined with US divestment from East Asian studies

following the end of the Cold War, has prompted East Asian governments to sponsor US area studies scholarship through programs such as the Japan Foundation, the Korea Foundation, the Taiwan-based Chiang Ching Kuo Foundation, and, later, China's Confucius Institutes.<sup>22</sup> By pursuing a transnational research frame and reflecting on darker aspects of East Asian dance both past and present, this book challenges some of the outcomes of this new funding model, such as its tendency to promote nation-centered projects and discourage criticism of donor societies.

By invoking "East Asia" as a framing concept, this book embraces several methodological tenets that have long been foundational to area studies research and continue to be so today. These include (1) emphasis on deep historical and cultural contextualization, (2) use of original sources in East Asian languages, and (3) development of theoretical framings and historiographical timelines from within the logics of East Asian history, rather than treating US or European models as universal. While reinforcing these long-standing principles of area studies research, this book also builds on critical insights about how area studies can continue to grow and improve. To that end, this book disrupts nation-based models of "Chinese," "Japanese," or "Korean" culture, instead highlighting how these entities are constantly constructed, malleable, interconnected, and contested. Although the notion of "area" seems to imply a geographic region internally consistent and sealed off by fixed external boundaries, this is not the way East Asia is understood in critical area studies or in the methodology of this book. By contrast, as each chapter in this volume repeatedly asserts, dance and dancers in East Asia have always been internally diverse, moved across borders, and performed dances that are the products of transcultural processes.

The phrase "dancing East Asia" in the subtitle of this book encapsulates these many dimensions of a critical area studies approach to East Asian dance studies. East Asia here does not simply refer to a collection of political units that can be located on a map, nor does it refer to a fixed or homogenous cultural community defined by race, ethnicity, nationality, or language. Rather, "East Asia" points to a complex history of multidirectional exchanges, competing discourses and ideologies both internal and external to the region, and political struggles over East Asia—as a place, a transnational community, and a political idea. Dancing East Asia means looking head-on into these complexities and contradictions. It means locating where dance moves at the interstices of stable meanings to push forward this process of critical dialogue and self-reflection.

DECENTERING WHITENESS:  
EAST ASIAN DANCE STUDIES AS ANTI-ORIENTALIST STRATEGY

Similar to critical area studies, critical dance studies emerged over the past several decades as a self-reflexive, politically engaged model of dance scholarship that attends to and seeks to challenge historical inequities and power structures shaping knowledge production in dance research. One theme that has been particularly important in critical dance studies is the critique of whiteness and its corresponding history of Western centrism in the discipline of dance studies. In accounts of dance in the US context, critical dance studies scholars have documented and challenged the tendency of dance critics and researchers to emphasize the contributions of white dancers and choreographers while discounting or ignoring those of artists of color.<sup>23</sup> These scholars have deconstructed the racial ideologies informing many persistent conceptual dichotomies in conventional US dance theory and historiography, such as those between “modern dance” and “ethnic dance,” “contemporary” and “traditional,” and “art” and “culture.” By valuing the contributions of dancers classified as nonwhite, they have worked to identify and overcome racism in US dance practice, criticism, and research, while offering models for challenging racist narratives in the study of dance elsewhere in the world.

This book extends the critique of whiteness in US dance studies by foregrounding the voices and contributions of nonwhite artists in and from East Asia. The performers and choreographers discussed in this book include many influential figures in the modern history of East Asian dance—artists such as Mei Lanfang, Wu Xiaobang, Fujikage Shizue, Murayama Tomoyoshi, Park Yeong-in, Dai Ailian, Seo Jeongseon, Ito Michio, Lin Lee-chen, Choe Seung-hui, Chen Ailian, Yang Liping, Ashikawa Yoko, Furukawa Anzu, and Huang Yi. Many of these individuals have received little or no attention in previous English-language dance scholarship. Moreover, those who have are often studied from the perspective of how their work drew on or contributed to the activities of white artists based in the West, rather than contextualizing them in relation to other East Asian artists, artists of other nonwhite racial or ethnic backgrounds, or within the historical trajectories of dance in East Asia. By contrast, every essay in this volume prioritizes the ideas and voices of East Asian artists, by delving into their memoirs, essays, letters, interviews, and other textual traces that help us to better understand the intentions and concerns motivating their dance works in their own words. Thus, even when chapters in this book examine relationships between East Asian dancers and their white counterparts or audiences in the West, they do so from the per-



spective of the East Asian dancers. Additionally, the book not only prioritizes the contributions of East Asian artists but situates the significance of their work within historical narratives in which places, people, and issues of East Asia are at the center.

One important way that whiteness has been constructed historically is through the discourses of Orientalism, an ideology that posits radical difference between the East and the West, often as a justification for cultural, military, and economic interventions that advance the interests of people and groups associated with the West. The racist history of Orientalism in much English-language writing about Asian people and societies has meant that dancers from Asia have often been presented passively either as objects of representation or bearers of fixed ancient traditions, rather than actively as subjects who articulate their own ideas and create new artistic forms relevant to their contemporary lives. It has also meant that dance forms thought to have originated in the Western world and attributed to the innovations of white dancers are often treated as more modern, innovative, and meaningful than dances originating in Asia or attributed to Asian dancers. Such Orientalist narratives of Asian dance have furthered the imagined distinction between the East and the West, reinforcing the myth of absolute difference on which Orientalist discourses are based, by positing Asian dance forms as products of isolated national cultures separate from and irrelevant to global dance history.

An important development in critical dance studies has been the emergence of anti-Orientalist scholarship that explicitly challenges these views. Such work offers new ways of understanding dancers and dance practices in and from Asia, while also complicating received histories of Asian dancers' engagements with many so-called "Western" dance forms. Within this larger body of anti-Orientalist dance scholarship, work in South Asian dance studies has played an especially prominent role, producing important books that foreground the creative interventions of South Asian and South Asian diaspora artists working in a wide range of dance styles.<sup>24</sup> These projects do much to deconstruct the Orientalist notion that South Asian dance consists of static traditions perpetually rooted in the past and disconnected from the modern world (ideas often promoted by practitioners of these forms themselves). They also demonstrate the ways in which all dance practitioners—whether they work in the categories of classical, folk, modern, contemporary, or something else—are drawing on and responding to issues in their own lives and contemporary conditions. The divide between "traditional" and "contemporary" forms, as shown in this scholarship, is often more a matter of

aesthetic choices, choreographic methods, and cultural discourses than it is about the temporality or creativity of such dances. Furthermore, they reveal that the imagined cultural purity or national origins associated with various dance forms (whether South Asian or Western) are also discursive constructions that mask historical and contemporary processes marked by hybridity and interaction. In sum, this anti-Orientalist scholarship has shown that no dance tradition has a monopoly on contemporaneity or creativity and that South Asian dance is as local and national as it is worldly and global.

*Corporeal Politics: Dancing East Asia* advances the project of de-Orientalizing Asian dance studies by similarly highlighting the inventiveness of East Asian dancers and choreographers and the contemporaneity, cultural hybridity, and worldliness of East Asian dance forms. Like South Asia, East Asia gave rise to a vast array of inherited, reconstructed, and newly created classical and folk dance forms during the twentieth century. Although they emerged in different historical conditions and followed different paths of development from their South Asian counterparts, many of these dance styles similarly remain central to the contemporary landscape of dance in East Asia and East Asian diaspora communities today. The contributors to this book provide varied approaches to the study of classical and folk dances in East Asia. However, what unites their accounts is a shared understanding that these forms are products of modern historical circumstances, not static traditions that have been handed down unchanged through time or that embody pure essences of local or national cultures. Bringing an anti-Orientalist approach to the study of these dance forms does not undermine their authenticity or cultural value, nor does it suggest that they are not grounded in longer traditions with deep meanings in their respective communities. In fact, as the essays in this volume show, many dances regarded in East Asia today as classical and folk forms do emerge out of sustained efforts by East Asian dancers and choreographers to learn from the past. By showing the contributions that individual artists have made toward developing and promoting these dance forms and by examining the historical conditions in which they have done so, anti-Orientalist approaches such as the ones demonstrated in this book add to, rather than take away from, the meaning and significance of these practices. They help to show how the concept of tradition itself is deeply entrenched in modern historical processes, meaning that the very act of claiming to embody tradition is part of a modern mindset and predicament. By showing differences, disagreements, and debates within the worlds of classical and folk dance in East Asia, the essays in this volume further challenge the common, though often misguided, view that a claim

to represent tradition necessarily reinforces uniformity or suppresses artistic creativity.

One key way that East Asia differs from many other parts of Asia is that it was never fully colonized by a European government, as most of South Asia was by the British and different parts of Southeast Asia were by the British, Dutch, Spanish, French, and US. Nevertheless, this does not mean that East Asia lacked intensive cultural interaction with Europe or was immune from the cultural effects of Western imperialism. Cultural traffic between East Asia and Europe dates back centuries, first facilitated by land trade across the Silk Roads that traversed Central Asia from the start of the first millennium CE, and later through sea traffic that brought missionaries, merchants, and gunboats along with Western imperial expansion.<sup>25</sup> During the mid-nineteenth century, East Asia was forced to open its ports to European and US trade, and many coastal cities gained international settlements that operated under colonial or semicolonial conditions. During the early twentieth century, Tokyo emerged as a hub of Western culture within East Asia through its status as the local colonial metropole, and it was through this city that many dancers across East Asia gained exposure to Western concert dance forms such as ballet and early modern dance. The close contact and later political alliance between Japan and Germany made Berlin a common destination for East Asian dancers traveling abroad from the 1910s through the 1940s. This facilitated the emergence of an East Asian field of “New Dance” centered in Japan that arose in tandem with German expressionist dance or *Neue Tanz*.<sup>26</sup> During the Cold War, parts of East Asia that were aligned politically with the US, such as Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, participated in intercultural exchange with dancers and other artists from North America and Western Europe.<sup>27</sup> Meanwhile, dancers and choreographers in North Korea and China participated in a different set of intercultural exchanges centered in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and left-leaning countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.<sup>28</sup>

By addressing the many ways in which East Asian dancers and choreographers have traveled and worked abroad and engaged with dance communities beyond East Asia, this book challenges the Orientalist idea that East Asian dance exists in an exotic and distant vacuum separated from the rest of global dance history. Regardless of the dance styles and scenes in which they participated, the artists discussed in this book were all involved, to varying degrees, in processes and circulations that stretched beyond the geographic and cultural sphere of East Asia. When dance styles from outside the region circulated to East Asia, these dancers took them up and transformed them through

their own visions. Moreover, when dancers from East Asia traveled abroad, their work too responded to their new environments. This movement across borders is an inherent part of the lives of dancers, dance works, and dance forms in East Asia, as it has so often been for dancers in other parts of the world. By showing that dance in East Asia has always been global, this book advances critical anti-Orientalist dance studies and identifies dance as a lens for the exploration of intercultural processes in East Asia past and present.

**CORPOREAL POLITICS:  
METHODOLOGY AND OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS**

A sustained attention to politics is one of the shared features of both critical area studies and critical dance studies. Thus, by proposing “corporeal politics” as an organizing theme, this book aims to bridge the insights of these two fields, while highlighting what critical East Asian dance studies can add to the existing discussions. The methodology of corporeal politics recognizes the central place of the artist’s physical body in dance, in which the aesthetically structured body in motion serves as the primary medium for artistic expression and the production of meaning. This importance of the body in dance also means that aspects of an artist’s identity that are physically marked on the body or inform the ways people move in the world—such as race, ethnicity, sex, gender, sexuality, class, nationality, and citizenship—are particularly highlighted in dance performance, and the political significance of dance is negotiated, felt, and performed first and foremost in bodily actions and experiences. A focus on corporeal politics pinpoints individual bodies located in specific historical contexts as the focus of our investigation. In this way, it discourages generalizations about national, ethnic, or cultural groups or dance forms, insisting that any analysis of East Asian dance must be located in concrete, historically specific bodies and sociopolitical situations. By offering politicized readings of dancing bodies in East Asia, this book locates dance within the broader structures of power and knowledge that critical area studies and critical dance studies scholars have expertly revealed, reflected upon, and challenged. Taking dance as an art that makes the politics of bodies visible, palpable, and transformable by displaying and manipulating them in ways uncommon in daily life, the methodology of corporeal politics models the investigation of these political interventions and the impacts of dance’s bodily acts as one way to pursue critical East Asian dance studies.

Radical contextualization is at the heart of the methodology of corporeal politics. Therefore, each case study in this volume presents a slightly different articulation of this concept; no single, unified definition or model is held consistent across the book. It is important for this method that politics itself can mean different things in different contexts. Thus, in one essay, “politics” may refer to the nuances of interpersonal relations while in another it may refer to diplomatic negotiations between governments at war. Even definitions of the body can vary, ranging from the human dancer to the anthropomorphized robot. Rather than repeat a single view of corporeal politics in each case study, the chapters offer competing definitions that can be compared against one another. In this way, they produce not a normative, universal model but instead a spectrum of possibilities that reflects the many directions such analysis may take.

Part I, “Contested Genealogies,” begins chronologically with the earliest case studies in the book, considering dance and performance in East Asia before and at the turn of the twentieth century. In chapter 1, “Sexuality, Status, and the Female Dancer: Legacies of Imperial China,” historian Beverly Bossler traces the changing definitions and social contexts of dance in China from ancient times, paying special attention to gender, sexuality, and class as intersectional categories that shaped dancers’ lives and social mobilities. Bossler shows that dance has often been closely connected to sexual allure in China and other parts of East Asia. She argues that this association made female dancers (and later boys and eunuchs who performed feminine roles) inherently transgressive figures capable of moving in unusual ways across social hierarchies.

In chapter 2, “Mei Lanfang and Modern Dance: Transcultural Innovation in Peking Opera, 1910s–1920s,” literary scholar Catherine Yeh takes up the historical encounter between Chinese operatic theater and early Western modern dance in the opening decades of the twentieth century, through the lens of one of China’s most famous actors—legendary Peking opera star and female impersonator Mei Lanfang. Analyzing Mei’s cross-gender stage performances and the writings of his close artistic collaborator Qi Rushan, Yeh demonstrates that dance operated as a modernizing force in Chinese theater, while it also initiated the search for a new transcultural bodily aesthetic that would be capable of performing newly imagined ideas of Chinese cultural authenticity.

In chapter 3, “The Conflicted Monk: Choreographic Adaptations of *Si fan* (Longing for the Mundane) in Japan’s and China’s New Dance Movements,” East Asian studies scholar Nan Ma looks at the transnational circulation

of well-known story cycles—in this case *Si fan* 思凡, a story of a Buddhist monk's or nun's test of faith—as an enduring aspect of dance culture in East Asia. Ma compares two choreographies based on the *Si fan* story, one staged in 1921 by female Japanese dancer Fujikage Shizue and the other in 1942 by male Chinese dancer Wu Xiaobang. In her analysis of these two adaptations of the same tale, Ma considers how the dancers' gender and social status, as well as different local reactions to New Dance, influence their divergent choreographic renditions and the messages they relate about morality, desire, and modernity.

Part 2, “Decolonizing Migration,” stretches the geographic boundaries of East Asia by considering people who traverse the region's borders as important creators and subjects of East Asian dance. In chapter 4, “Murayama Tomoyoshi and Dance of Modern Times: A Forerunner of the Japanese Avant-garde,” and chapter 5, “Korean Dance Beyond Koreanness: Park Yeong-in in the German Modern Dance Scene,” dance and performance scholars Kazuko Kuniyoshi and Okju Son both look at individuals who traveled from Japan to Germany during the early twentieth century and consider the impacts of these journeys on their dance careers. Murayama Tomoyoshi, who went to Berlin in 1922, is significant in that he was one of the only Japanese modern dancers of his time to be critical of influential German expressionist dancer Mary Wigman. As Kuniyoshi shows, Murayama chose not to adopt Wigman's style and instead developed his own dance theories. Park Yeong-in's case is different from Murayama's in that Park did not arrive in Germany until 1937, and before that he had already studied Western dance in Japan and staged new choreography inspired by Korean traditional performance, as was common for Korean colonial subjects in Japan at the time. As Son shows, Park was greeted in Germany as a professional dancer, and during his time abroad he acted as a performer and teacher of East Asian dance rather than a student of German dance.

In chapter 6, “Diasporic Moves: Sinophone Epistemology in the Choreography of Dai Ailian,” and chapter 7, “Choreographing Neoliberal Marginalization: Dancing Migrant Bodies in the South Korean Musical *Bballae* (*Laundry*),” Chinese studies scholar Emily Wilcox and theater scholar Ji Hyon (Kayla) Yuh address the opposite direction of migration, not from the inside out but from the outside in. Examining the career of Trinidad-born Chinese diasporic dancer Dai Ailian, Wilcox shows how Dai's choreographic repertoires staged in Hong Kong and Chongqing during the 1940s enacted different place-based embodiments of Chinese identity. Wilcox argues that these embodiments, which were informed by Dai's intercultural upbringing as

both a British colonial subject and a patriotic Overseas Chinese, performed what Shu-mei Shih calls the “multiply-angulated critique” of Sinophone epistemology. In her analysis of the 2005 original South Korean Broadway-style musical *Bballae (Laundry)*, Yuh turns to a very different context of inward migration in East Asia, namely, racialized male Mongolian and Filipino labor immigrants and working-class women in contemporary urban South Korea. By reading movement together with song lyrics and dialogue, Yuh shows how *Bballae* depicts migrants as assimilable only when their range of expression is constrained and their ambitions align with neoliberal values.

Part 3, “Militarization and Empire,” turns to dance and the Japanese Empire during and after World War II, looking at how performance can both serve and deconstruct militarized cultures. In chapter 8, “Masking Japanese Militarism as a Dream of Sino-Japanese Friendship: *Miyako Odori* Performances in the 1930s,” performance scholar Mariko Okada delves into the popular Kyoto tradition of *Miyako Odori*, a public geisha dance that has been performed annually each spring since 1872. Okada shows how, in the late 1930s, *Miyako Odori* was turned into a tool for disseminating Japan’s imperialist propaganda, with children portraying cheerful and idyllic images of Sino-Japanese friendship at a time when Japanese armies were waging a violent war in China.

In chapter 9, “Imagined Choreographies: Itō Michio’s Philippines Pageant and the Transpacific Performance of Japanese Imperialism,” performance scholar Tara Rodman looks at another example of dance in service of Japanese empire, but one with a very different genealogy. Analyzing an unrealized 1944 plan made by international modern dancer Itō Michio for a national festival pageant to be held in the Japanese-occupied Philippines, Rodman shows how Itō drew on his earlier experiences studying at the Jaques-Dalcroze Institute for Eurythmics in Hellerau, Germany, and staging mass performances in Washington, DC, and Los Angeles, California. Looked at together, Okada’s and Rodman’s chapters show how Western modern dance and Japanese traditional dance were equally susceptible to appropriation by Japan’s war effort.

In chapter 10, “Exorcism and Reclamation: Lin Lee-chen’s *Jiao* and the Corporeal History of the Taiwanese,” dance scholar Ya-ping Chen discusses how, following fifty years of Japanese colonization in 1895–1945, the new KMT government on Taiwan imposed a period of martial law in 1949–1987 that continued, in new ways, the militarization of Taiwanese bodies and sensibilities. In this context, Chen reads Taiwanese contemporary dance choreographer Lin Lee-chen’s 1995 work *Jiao* (*Mirrors of Life*) as an exorcism of the militarized body and a reclamation of sensuous and empathic life, which Lin

achieves through her use of elements of indigenous and local culture and religious rites embedded in local Taiwan history.

Part 4, “Socialist Aesthetics,” looks at the creation and transformation of socialist dance culture in postrevolutionary North Korea and the People’s Republic of China.

In chapter 11, “Choe Seung-hui Between Classical and Folk: Aesthetics of National Form and Socialist Content in North Korea,” historian Suzy Kim excavates the post-1946 career of Choe Seung-hui, one of the most renowned figures in early twentieth-century East Asian dance. Challenging existing views of North Korean performance culture that emphasize its propaganda function, Kim explores the theoretical and artistic depth of Choe’s dance writings, choreography, and pedagogy, showing her engagement with transnational socialist culture and her enduring legacy in Korean dance today.

In chapter 12, “The Dilemma of Chinese Classical Dance: Traditional or Contemporary?,” and Chapter 13, “Negotiating Chinese Identity through a Double-Minority Voice and the Female Dancing Body: Yang Liping’s *Spirit of the Peacock* and Beyond,” dance scholars Dong Jiang and Ting-Ting Chang examine two of the most prevalent styles of dance performed in the PRC and Chinese diaspora communities worldwide today—Chinese classical dance and Chinese national folk dance—both of which were first canonized and promoted during the socialist era. Tracing the historical development of Chinese classical dance from the 1950s to the early twenty-first century, Jiang shows how constant debate within the field has encouraged continued new innovations and the emergence of multiple voices and competing styles of Chinese classical dance. At the same time, changes in Chinese classical dance serve as a barometer of the transformation of contemporary Chinese society. Chang analyzes the work of Yang Liping, the most influential ethnic minority dance performer and choreographer in the Chinese-speaking world today. Chang shows how, through her innovative renditions of Dai peacock dance, Yang molded a powerful personal and local brand, bringing economic opportunities to her home region of Yunnan and establishing herself as a feminist entrepreneur icon, while also continuing to insert female ethnic minority images into portrayals of Chinese culture domestically and globally.

Part 5, “Collective Technologies,” examines dances that engage social issues through collective performance strategies in contemporary East Asia. In chapter 14, “Cracking History’s Codes in Crocodile Time: The Sweat, Powder, and Glitter of Women Butoh Artists’ Collective Choreography,” performance scholar Katherine Mezur addresses the work of Ashikawa Yoko and Furukawa



Anzu, two Japanese women artists who were central to the domestic and transnational evolution of butoh from the 1970s to the 2000s. Taking a feminist revisionist view of butoh history, Mezur shows how official histories have minoritized these major women performer-choreographers by placing them within the genealogies of male figures such as Hijikata Tatsumi. Attending to their work in Japan and abroad, Mezur shows how these women artists' innovations grew out of historically specific experiences of gender, class, and labor.

In chapter 15, "Fans, Sashes, and Jesus: Evangelical Activism and Anti-LGBTQ Performance in South Korea," performance scholar Soo Ryon Yoon analyzes the use of dance in anti-LGBTQ activism by right-wing Christian Protestant groups in South Korea. Yoon shows that conservative nationalism plays an important role in anti-LGBTQ evangelical activism and shows how Christianity and nationalism have been linked through choreographed performances in South Korea since the early twentieth century. Yoon argues that the seeming spectacularity of dance in contemporary evangelical activism conceals the visibility of a larger community of "respectable" groups who also push forward homophobic nationalist ideologies. She also considers how queer activists and their allies reappropriate national dance styles and imbue them with new meanings.

In chapter 16, "Choreographing Digital Performance in Twenty-First-Century Taiwan: *Huang Yi & KUKA*," dance scholar Yatin Lin concludes the book by investigating new dances by Taiwan-based choreographer Huang Yi that reflect on relationships between humans and digital technology. First, Lin traces the development of digital performance as a new creative industry in Taiwan that links choreographers such as Huang to transnational communities of digital artists, programmers, and dancers. The focus of the chapter is Huang's 2012–2015 work *Huang Yi & KUKA*, a dance featuring collaborative performances between human dancers and KUKA, an anthropomorphic industrial robot. The work poses existential questions about agency, mortality, and human-machine bonds. Lin argues that by exploring such questions through new technology, Huang has established himself within a new generation of "culturepreneurs" in the dance field of contemporary Taiwan and East Asia more broadly.

Each chapter includes illustrations of the dances discussed. Additionally, readers are encouraged to visit the Open Access *Corporeal Politics* Fulcrum multimedia platform at <https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.11521701>. A list of relevant materials on Fulcrum, including videos, additional images, and links to external sources, can be found at the end of each chapter.

### Notes

1. Angela Falco Howard, Li Song, Wu Hung, and Yang Hong, *Chinese Sculpture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 17–200.
2. For more on definitions of “East Asia,” see below.
3. For some exceptions, see A. C. Scott, *Literature and the Arts in Twentieth-Century China* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1963); Lee Hye-gu, *An Introduction to Korean Music and Dance* (Seoul: Seoul Royal Asiatic Society, Korea Branch, 1977); Frank Hoff, *Song, Dance, and Storytelling: Aspects of the Performing Arts in Japan* (Ithaca, NY: China-Japan Program, Cornell University, 1978).
4. For some exceptions, see Carl Wolz, *Bugaku: Japanese Court Dance, with the Notation of Basic Movements and of Nasori* (Providence, RI: Asian Music Publications, 1971); Judy Van Zile, ed., *Dance in Africa, Asia, and the Pacific: Selected Readings* (New York: MSS Information Corporation, 1976); Adrienne L. Kaeppler, Judy Van Zile, and Carl Wolz, eds., *Asian and Pacific Dance: Selected Papers from the 1974 COD-SEM Conference* (New York: Committee on Research in Dance, 1977).
5. See, for example, Anya Peterson Royce, *The Anthropology of Dance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977).
6. For some exceptions, see Masakatsu Gunji, trans. Don Kenny, with an introduction by James R. Brandon, *Buyo: the Classical Dance* (New York: Walker/Weatherhill, 1970); Masataro Togi, trans. Don Kenny, with an introduction by William P. Malm, *Gagaku: Court Music and Dance* (New York: Walker/Weatherhill, 1971).
7. On the development of performance studies in the United States, see Shannon Jackson, *Professing Performance: Theatre in the Academy from Philology to Performativity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
8. See, for example, Jennifer Robertson, *Takarazuka: Sexual Politics and Popular Culture in Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Sondra Fraleigh, *Dancing Into Darkness: Butoh, Zen, and Japan* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1999); Judy Van Zile, *Perspectives on Korean Dance* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2001); Katherine Mezur, *Beautiful Boys/Outlaw Bodies: Devising Kabuki Female-Likeness* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Nathan Hesselink, *P'ungmul: South Korean Drumming and Dance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); Tomie Hahn, *Sensational Knowledge: Embodying Culture Through Japanese Dance* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2007); Andrew Field, *Shanghai's Dancing World: Cabaret Culture and Urban Politics, 1919–1954* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Chinese University Press, 2010); Sondra Fraleigh, *Butoh: Metamorphic Dance and Global Alchemy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010); Bruce Baird, *Hijikata Tatsumi and Butoh: Dancing in a Pool of Gray Grits* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); SanSan Kwan, *Kinesthetic Cities: Dance in Chinese Urban Spaces* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Yatin Lin, *Sino-Corporealities: Contemporary Choreographies from Taipei, Hong Kong, and New York* (Taipei: Taipei National University of the Arts, 2015); Eun-Joo Lee and Yong-Shin Kim, *Salpuri-Chum, A Korean Dance for Expelling Evil Spir-*

its: *A Psychoanalytic Interpretation of Its Artistic Characteristics* (Lanham, MD: Hamilton Books, 2017); Emily Wilcox, *Revolutionary Bodies: Chinese Dance and the Socialist Legacy* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019).

9. Apart from the monographs listed above, see also Ruth Solomon and John Solomon, eds., *East Meets West in Dance: Voices in a Cross-Cultural Dialogue* (Chur, Switzerland: Harwood Academic, 1997); Wang Yunyu and Stephanie Burrridge, eds., *Identity and Diversity: Celebrating Dance in Taiwan* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2012); Shih-Ming Li Chang and Lynn Frederiksen, *Chinese Dance: In the Vast Land and Beyond* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2016); Bruce Baird and Rosemary Candelario, eds., *The Routledge Companion to Butoh Performance* (London: Routledge, 2018).

10. Both the US and China recognize Taiwan officially as part of China. However, Taiwan has its own political system and a dance history distinct from that of the Chinese mainland. Hong Kong was a British colony until 1997, and Macau was a territory of Portugal until 1999. Both are now Special Administrative Regions of the PRC. For a general introduction to politics, society, and culture in contemporary East Asia, see Anne Prescott, *East Asia in the World: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

11. The Middle East and Central Asia are also considered part of Asia, but they are typically not included in “Asian studies.” The US-based Association for Asian Studies, for example, excludes most of these two regions from its academic purview.

12. For a historical overview of these relationships and their different trajectories in each place, see Charles Holcombe, *A History of East Asia: From the Origins of Civilization to the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

13. Although Pan-Asianism was not limited to East Asia, Japan and China were important centers for this discourse, and concepts of East Asian unity and cooperation were one important component of this broader phenomenon. See Sven Saaler and Christopher Szpilman, eds., *Pan-Asianism: A Documentary History* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011); Torsten Weber, *Embracing “Asia” in China and Japan: Asianism Discourse and the Contest for Hegemony, 1912–1933* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

14. Saaler and Szpilman, *Pan-Asianism*, 5.

15. Jeremy Yellen, *The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere: When Total Empire Met Total War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019).

16. Numerous studies have established the historical connections between area studies and US foreign policy during the postwar period, particularly regarding the Cold War. For a short overview, see Hossein Khosrowjahi, “A Brief History of Area Studies and International Studies,” *Arab Studies Quarterly* 33, no. 3/4 (2011): 131–42.

17. Two key history textbooks for East Asian studies produced during this period, *East Asia: The Great Tradition* (1960) and *East Asia: The Modern Transformation* (1965), were authored by Harvard professors who worked for the US State Department during World War II and subsequently helped facilitate East Asian studies’ service to US Cold War interests.

18. For a historical account, see Xiaobing Li, *The Cold War in East Asia* (London: Routledge, 2018).

19. Fabio Lanza, *The End of Concern: Maoist China, Activism, and Asian Studies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017).

20. See, for example, Tani E. Barlow, ed., *Formations of Colonial Modernity in East Asia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997); Bruce Cumings, *Parallax Visions: Making Sense of American–East Asian Relations* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002); Kuan-Hsing Chen, *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Shu-mei Shih, Chien-hsin Tsai, and Brian Bernards, eds., *Sinophone Studies: A Critical Reader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

21. David Szanton, ed. *The Politics of Knowledge: Area Studies and the Disciplines* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

22. Masao Miyoshi and H. D. Harootunian, eds., *Learning Places: The Afterlives of Area Studies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002).

23. For a small sampling of influential monographs in this broad field, see, for example, Brenda Dixon Gottschild, *Digging the Africanist Presence in American Performance: Dance and Other Contexts* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1996); Ananya Chatterjea, *Butting Out: Reading Resistive Choreographies Through Works by Jawole Willa Jo Zollar and Chandralekha* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2004); Susan Manning, *Modern Dance, Negro Dance: Race in Motion* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004); Jacqueline Shea Murphy, *The People Have Never Stopped Dancing: Native American Modern Dance Histories* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007); Yutian Wong, *Choreographing Asian America* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2010); Adria Imada, *Aloha America: Hula Circuits through the U.S. Empire* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); Priya Srinivasan, *Sweating Saris: Indian Dance as Transnational Labor* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2012); Rebecca Rossen, *Dancing Jewish: Jewish Identity in American Modern and Post-modern Dance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Anthea Kraut, *Choreographing Copyright: Race, Gender, and Intellectual Property Rights in American Dance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

24. See, for example, Chatterjea, *Butting Out*; Avanthi Meduri, ed., *Rukmini Devi Arundale, 1904–1986: A Visionary Architect of Indian Culture and the Performing Arts* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2005); Janet O’Shea, *At Home in the World: Bharata Natyam on the Global Stage* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2007); Pallabi Chakravorty, *Bells of Change: Kathak Dance, Women and Modernity in India* (Calcutta, London, and New York: Seagull, 2008); Susan A. Reed, *Dance and the Nation: Performance, Ritual, and Politics in Sri Lanka* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010); Davesh Soneji, ed., *Bharatnatyam: A Reader* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010); Prarthana Purkayastha, *Indian Modern Dance, Feminism and Transnationalism* (Houndsmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Royona Mitra, *Akram Khan: Dancing New Interculturalism* (Houndsmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

25. See Bossler, Yeh, and Yoon, this volume.

26. For English-language studies of Tokyo’s role as a hub of Western dance culture in East Asia during this period, see Kazuko Yamazaki, “Nihon Buyo: Classical Dance

of Modern Japan” (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2001); Toshiharu Omuka, “Dancing and Performing: Japanese Artists in the Early 1920s at the Dawn of Modern Dance,” *Experiment* 10 (2004):157–70; Yukihiko Yoshida, “National Dance Under the Rising Sun, Mainly from National Dance, Buyō Geijutsu and the Activities of Takaya Eguchi,” *International Journal of Eastern Sports and Physical Education* 7, no. 1 (October 2009): 88–103; Ya-ping Chen, “Colonial Modernity and Female Dancing Bodies in Early Taiwanese Modern Dance,” in *Identity and Diversity: Celebrating Dance in Taiwan*, eds. Wang Yunyu and Stephanie Burrige (New Delhi: Routledge, 2012); Faye Yuan Kleeman, “Dancers of the Empire,” in *In Transit: the Formation of the Colonial East Asian Cultural Sphere* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2014), 186–210; Nan Ma, “Transmediating Kinesthesia: Wu Xiaobang and Modern Dance in China, 1929–1939,” *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 28, no. 1 (2016): 129–73. See also Ma, Kuniyoshi, and Son, this volume.

27. On dance exchange in US-allied East Asia during the Cold War, see Ruth Solomon and John Solomon, eds., *East Meets West in Dance: Voices in a Cross-Cultural Dialogue* (Chur, Switzerland: Harwood Academic, 1997); Ya-ping Chen, “Dance History and Cultural Politics: A Study of Contemporary Dance in Taiwan, 1930s–1997” (PhD diss., New York University, 2003). See also Yuh, Mezur, and Yoon, this volume.

28. On North Korea and China’s intercultural dance exchange during the Cold War, see Emily Wilcox, “Performing Bandung: China’s Dance Diplomacy with India, Indonesia, and Burma, 1953–1962,” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 18, no. 4: 518–39; Emily Wilcox, “The Postcolonial Blind Spot: Chinese Dance in the Era of Third World-ism, 1949–1965,” *positions: asia critique* 26, no. 4 (2018): 781–815; Emily Wilcox, “Crossing Over: Choi Seunghee’s Pan-Asianism in Revolutionary Time,” *무용역사기록학 (The Journal of Society for Dance Documentation and History)* 51 (December): 65–97. See also Kim and Jiang, this volume.