

# Rethinking Chinese Socialist Theaters of Reform

*Performance, Practice,  
and Debate in the Mao Era*

Xiaomei Chen,  
Tarryn Li-Min Chun,  
and  
Siyuan Liu,  
Editors

*University of Michigan Press • Ann Arbor*

Copyright © 2021 by Xiaomei Chen, Tarryn Li-Min Chun, and Siyuan Liu  
All rights reserved

For questions or permissions, please contact [um.press.perms@umich.edu](mailto:um.press.perms@umich.edu)

Published in the United States of America by the  
University of Michigan Press  
Manufactured in the United States of America  
Printed on acid-free paper  
First published March 2021

A CIP catalog record for this book is available from the British Library.

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication data has been applied for.*

ISBN 978-0-472-07475-4 (hardcover : alk. paper)

ISBN 978-0-472-12851-8 (e-book)

## SIX      Aesthetic Politics at Home and Abroad

### *Dagger Society and the Development of Maoist Revolutionary Dance Drama*

EMILY WILCOX

In the late summer of 1959, the Shanghai Experimental Opera Theater (Shanghai shiyan gejuyuan 上海實驗歌劇院) premiered its first large-scale dance production, a seven-scene national dance drama titled *Dagger Society* (*Xiaodao hui* 小刀會) (“Shanghai huajujie” 1959). Taking local revolutionary history as its theme, *Dagger Society* staged a dramatic retelling of the real Dagger Society (*Xiaodao hui* 小刀會) revolt of 1853–1855, in which secret underground organizations in Shanghai rose up in armed rebellion against the Qing government.<sup>1</sup> The real Dagger Society held Shanghai and established its own city government, which eventually pledged allegiance to the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom (Taiping tianguo 太平天國), another rebel force then headquartered nearby in what is today Nanjing.<sup>2</sup> To put down the Dagger Society revolt, the Qing recruited support from Western imperialist powers in Shanghai, including Britain, France, and the United States, in return for renegotiated rights over customs, taxation, and administration of the concession territories. This meant that in addition to fighting against the Qing troops, the Dagger Society also eventually waged armed combat against Western imperialist forces, notably the French naval fleet in Shanghai. In this process, the revolt was finally crushed and many of its leaders died. These historical events were vividly portrayed in the dance drama, whose final scene depicted a climactic battle in which the Dagger Society members face off against the combined Qing and French armies. The scene is triumphant



Figure 6.1. Members of the Dagger Society, backed by the masses, confront Western imperialist leaders and Qing officials at the British consulate in Shanghai. From the national dance drama *Dagger Society* that premiered in 1959, performed by the Shanghai Experimental Opera Theatre. Photographer: Wu Yinbo. Originally published in *Renmin huabao* (People's Pictorial) 1960, no. 16, p. 25. Courtesy of China Foto Bank.

in that Dagger Society leaders Liu Lichuan 劉麗川 and Zhou Xiuying 周秀英 manage to kill both Wu Jianzhang 吳健彰, the Qing official who had negotiated the deal with the Western powers, and the French officer leading the foreign troops. However, Liu is mortally wounded, and the Dagger Society's soldiers and provisions dwindle.<sup>3</sup> Beyond the military component of the struggle, the dance drama also depicted economic and ideological factors. As shown in the revised 1961 film version, *Dagger Society* opened with scenes depicting Qing and Western collusion in the opium trade and the American villain Yan Matai's 晏瑪太 manipulation of Christianity to advance an imperialist agenda (*Xiaodao hui* 1961).<sup>4</sup>

Although *Dagger Society* was set in the nineteenth century and portrayed a historical revolt that was ultimately not successful, critics interpreted the story as a positive example in that it was both a precursor to the socialist revolution and a reminder of problems facing China in the contemporary era. In 1959, when *Dagger Society* premiered, China was celebrating its tenth anniversary as a socialist nation. At the same time, however, it was facing a host of grave problems in domestic and international affairs. For example, Sino-Soviet friendship was on the brink of collapse, an armed rebellion had just exploded in Tibet, and the country

was in its second year of the Great Leap Forward (1958–1962), a mass campaign that was designed to make China competitive with Western industrialized countries but ended in disaster, causing one of the largest famines in modern history.<sup>5</sup> The storyline of *Dagger Society* lent itself to many possible interpretations. The theme that most Chinese critics at the time emphasized, however, was that of “anti-imperialist struggle” (*fandi douzheng* 反帝鬥爭). Specifically, many saw the story portrayed in *Dagger Society* as an allegory for the Cold War, in which they regarded the United States as an imperialist threat that interfered to crush revolutionary movements in China and other developing countries for its own gain.<sup>6</sup> In his 1960 *Theater Gazette* (*Xiju bao* 戲劇報) review of *Dagger Society*, for instance, dance critic and choreographer You Huihai 游惠海 argued that the dance drama “offers profound educational meaning for today’s audiences” by “using vivid artistic images to expose the hideous face of [United States] imperialism” (You 1960, 13).<sup>7</sup>

Interpretations such as You’s encouraged audiences in China to see contemporary relevance in the historical events presented in *Dagger Society*. During the Great Leap Forward, popular slogans such as “Surpass England and Catch Up with the USA” already encouraged average Chinese citizens to see their daily activities in direct competition with Western countries. On the other hand, events such as the Tibetan rebellion and the related 1959 Sino-Indian border war, as well as the recall of Soviet advisors from China in 1960, offered contemporary narratives of betrayal and collusion that could be mapped onto the political triangle represented in *Dagger Society*. Thus, like the international revolutions depicted in mid-1960s productions discussed in Christopher Tang’s chapter in this volume, scenes of struggle in *Dagger Society* could hold a variety of meanings for contemporary audiences, domestic and foreign alike.

Keeping these thematic issues in mind, what I am interested in exploring in this essay are the ways in which political messages found expression in Chinese socialist theatrical productions like *Dagger Society*, not only in their dramatic content but also in their aesthetic form. In theater, as in all art, form is a fundamental component of a creative work. Thus, the types of languages used, how actors perform, and the casting, sets, music, costumes, and other design elements all contribute to the work and to audiences’ experiences of it. *Dagger Society* took the form of national dance drama (*minzu wuju* 民族舞劇), a new type of stage production developed in China during the socialist era, primarily in the latter half of the 1950s. In Chinese, a dance drama (*wuju* 舞劇) is a narrative performance that uses dance to tell a unified dramatic story. Thus,

instead of verbal language, such as spoken lines or song lyrics, a dance drama uses choreographic language or bodily movement as its primary expressive medium. Within this category of dance drama, national dance drama refers to works that are composed using local choreographic languages. So, in the context of Chinese national dance drama, it refers to productions that derive their movement languages from Chinese opera (*xiqu* 戲曲), ethnic minority dance, martial arts, folk performance, or some other local or regional material.

*Dagger Society* was one of China's first widely popularized works of national dance drama, making it pivotal in the development of this theatrical genre and an important example of aesthetic experimentation in China during the socialist era. The makers of *Dagger Society* helped pioneer creative methods that would become standard for national dance drama choreographers going forward. These included finding choreographic inspiration through field research, melding movement practices from diverse cultural sources into the same production, crafting movement technique that portrays dramatic characters, and using traditional skills in new ways to serve dance. For the creators of national dance drama, these aesthetic choices had political significance. At the time, European Romantic ballets were frequently performed in China by Soviet ensembles and were considered the model exemplars of dance drama structure and form. By creating the genre of national dance drama, Chinese choreographers aimed to compete with this European and Soviet ballet tradition, by producing a type of dance drama that grew out of Chinese movement sources and was thus unique to China. In their commitment to developing a local dance drama form, rather than copying Soviet ballet, the creators of *Dagger Society* thus translated the political ideal of anti-imperialism into an aesthetic strategy (Wilcox 2018c). Combined with narrative content that also foregrounded this theme, *Dagger Society* became a potent and timely political performance, provided that audiences could understand and appreciate it.

### Dance in Socialist China: A Brief History

Dance has a different historical trajectory in China than most other forms of theatrical performance. Unlike verbal theater, staged dance was not widespread in China in late imperial times at the height of Chinese opera or during the early twentieth century, when Western spoken drama, the hybrid civilized drama (*wenmingxi* 文明戲), and other modern genres were introduced. Rather, dance had been ascendant in China in early

and medieval times, after which it was replaced largely by verbal theatrical forms starting around the twelfth century. Dance continued to exist in private quarters and folk settings in these later eras but was not widely performed as a staged art, except within verbal theater.<sup>8</sup> Thus, examining dance in socialist China requires first considering how dance reemerged as an independent theatrical art form in China in modern times.

Like other new modes of theatrical performance developed in China during the twentieth century, modern concert dance was a product of intercultural processes. Yu Rongling 裕容齡, widely recognized as the first Chinese dance artist of the modern era, studied dance abroad between 1895 and 1903, first in Tokyo and then in Paris, then introduced modern stage dance to the Qing court beginning in 1904 (Tong 2013, 4–7; Ma 2015, 29–87). German-educated Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培, after he was appointed China’s minister of education in 1912, further promoted dance as part of his plan to Westernize Chinese schools, around the same time that movie theaters in major Chinese cities began showing film recordings and live performances of dancers from Europe, Japan, and the United States. Chinese opera reformers Mei Lanfang 梅蘭芳 and Qi Rushan 齊如山, inspired by these developments and their own travels abroad, then created a series of “dance driven operas” between 1915 and 1925 (Yeh 2016; 2017; 2020). Meanwhile, the popular Chinese musician and composer Li Jinhui 黎錦暉 pioneered a Chinese form of cabaret performance that featured dance, while Russian immigrants opened ballet schools and ensembles in cities such as Shanghai, Tianjin, and Harbin (Jones 2001; Sergeant 1991). By the late 1920s, Chinese periodicals were employing the new term *wuyong* (舞踊), the first modern Chinese term for concert dance, which was based on the Japanese neologism *buyō* that was coined in 1907 by Tsubouchi Shōyō 坪内逍遙 (“Wuyong” 1929; Yamazaki 2001, 186–187; Ma 2016).<sup>9</sup> It was not until the late 1930s, however, that a nascent domestic Chinese stage dance movement finally began to materialize around the work of Wu Xiaobang 吳曉邦, a Tokyo-trained dancer from China who had learned ballet, early American modern dance, and German Expressionist dance from Japanese teachers (Tong 2013; Ma 2015; Ma 2016; Wilcox 2019a).

While each of these earlier projects laid important foundations for the development of dance as an independent stage art in China, it was not until the 1940s—coinciding with the emergence of early Chinese socialist performance culture—that it became possible to speak of recognized dance forms and repertoires or of a network of artists who identified professionally as dancers. The new dance forms and repertoires

that emerged during this period fell largely into three categories: New Yangge (*xin yangge* 新秧歌), represented by practitioners in the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) base area in Yan'an, such as Chen Jinqing 陳錦清; Frontier Dance (*bianjiang wu* 邊疆舞), represented by practitioners in Kuomintang (KMT)-controlled areas, such as Qemberxanim (a.k.a. Kangba'erhan) 康巴爾汗 in Urumqi, Dai Ailian 戴愛蓮 in Chongqing, and Liang Lun 梁倫 in Kunming; and Oriental Dance (*Dongfang wu* 東方舞), represented by dancers in Japanese-occupied areas, such as Choe Seung-hui (a.k.a. Choi Seunghee) 崔承喜 (Wilcox 2018b; Wilcox 2019a; Wilcox 2019b). This cohort also had significant intercultural experience: Chen had studied abroad in North Korea; Qemberxanim was Uyghur and grew up in Soviet Central Asia; Dai was a third-generation diaspora Chinese who grew up in Trinidad; Liang Lun was from Guangdong and had spent time in Southeast Asia; and Choe was Korean and grew up in Korea and Japan. After 1949, the new styles of dance they promoted during the 1940s merged into the new national dance genre that came to represent socialist China during the 1950s and early 1960s, what became known as Chinese Dance (*Zhongguo wu* 中國舞).<sup>10</sup>

Early Chinese Dance had three core features that defined it as a genre. First, its practitioners emphasized “kinesthetic nationalism,” or the idea that it is form, rather than content, that determines the national character of a dance practice (Wilcox 2019a, 6). Form thus became the major site of creative innovation in early Chinese Dance, as practitioners sought to develop new dance styles that possessed distinctive national aesthetics. Typically, they did this by studying and adapting movement from existing local performance traditions, such as Chinese opera, rural folk dance, martial arts, ethnic minority performance, etc. Second, early Chinese Dance practitioners advocated “ethnic and spatial inclusivity,” or the idea that Chinese dance should represent all of China’s diverse ethnic groups and geographical regions, not just the majority Han or urban coastal areas (Wilcox 2019a, 6). This principle was premised on the idea that China is a multiethnic country with distinct regional cultural traditions. Third, early Chinese Dance practitioners promoted “dynamic inheritance,” or a process of creating dance that combines research and study of existing traditions with new innovation based on artistic creativity (Wilcox 2018a; Wilcox 2019a, 6). The dynamic inheritance approach took as a basic principle the idea that cultural continuity necessarily involves change. Combining these three core principles, the creators of Chinese Dance thus built on diverse existing performance practices while aiming to develop something fundamentally new.



By the early 1950s, there were three recognized streams within Chinese Dance in the People's Republic of China (PRC). These comprised newly devised dance styles that each took inspiration from a different body of local performance material. The first of these was "Han folk dance" (*Hanzu minjian wu* 漢族民間舞), which grew out of New Yangge and took inspiration from performance practices in rural Han communities. Unlike New Yangge, which grew mainly from performance forms in Shaanxi and central north China, however, Han folk dance embraced material from multiple regions. The Central Song and Dance Ensemble (Zhongyang gewutuan 中央歌舞團), established in 1952, was the national ensemble specializing in this style. Among its well-known early Han folk dance repertory was "Red Silk Dance" (*Hongchou wu* 紅綢舞), which premiered in Jilin in 1951, and "Picking Tea and Catching Butterflies" (*Caicha pudie* 採茶撲蝶), which premiered in Fujian in 1952. The second stream of Chinese Dance developed in the early 1950s was "ethnic minority dance" (*shaoshu minzu wudao* 少數民族舞蹈), which grew out of Frontier Dance and took inspiration from performance practices of non-Han communities. Like Frontier Dance, ethnic minority dance embodied the twentieth-century political ideal of China as a multiethnic nation (Wilcox 2016). The Central Nationalities Song and Dance Ensemble (Zhongyang minzu gewutuan 中央民族歌舞團), established in 1952, was the national ensemble specializing in this style. Well-known early works of ethnic minority dance include Tibetan-themed "Friendship Dance" (*Youyi wu* 友誼舞) that premiered in 1954, and Mongol-themed "Ordos Dance" (*E'erdusi wu* 鄂爾多斯舞) that premiered in 1955. In the national dance curriculum introduced at the Beijing Dance School in 1954, Han folk dance and ethnic minority dance were combined together under the umbrella term "folk dance" (*minjian wu* 民間舞), later renamed "Chinese national folk dance" (*Zhongguo minzu minjian wu* 中國民族民間舞). The third stream of Chinese Dance developed in the early 1950s was "Chinese classical dance" (*Zhongguo gudian wu* 中國古典舞), which grew out of Oriental Dance and took inspiration from Chinese opera, especially Beijing opera (*jingju* 京劇) and *kunqu* 崑曲.<sup>11</sup> Unlike Oriental Dance, which initially took inspiration from theater and dance forms across Asia, Chinese classical dance focused solely on dance styles developed from Chinese sources. The Central Experimental Opera Theater (Zhongyang shiyan gejuyuan 中央實驗歌劇院), established in 1953, was the national ensemble specializing in this style. Well-known works of early Chinese classical dance include "Lotus Dance" (*Hehua wu* 荷花舞)

and “Sword Dance” (*Jian wu* 劍舞), which both premiered in 1953. The majority of *Dagger Society* is also composed in this style (Wilcox 2019a).

Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, Chinese Dance was the predominant dance genre of professional dance ensembles in China, and new works created in its three major styles became the standard embodiments of China’s new socialist dance culture at home and abroad (Wilcox 2019a; Wilcox 2020). In 1957, the All-China Festival of Professional Music and Dance Ensembles (Quanguo zhuan ye tuanti yinyue wudao huiyan 全國專業團體音樂舞蹈會演) held in Beijing revealed that professional dance ensembles all across the country were actively producing new works of Chinese Dance, including Han folk dance, ethnic minority dance, and Chinese classical dance (Liu 1957). In 1959 and 1963, two newly created dance films that featured compilations of dance works by ensembles across the country also documented the continuation of this trend (*Bai feng chao yang* 1959; *Caidie fenfei* 1963). The most important international events in which dance works from China were presented during this period were the dance competitions held at the World Festivals of Youth and Students (WFYS, *Shijie qingnian lianhuanjie* 世界青年聯歡節), which China attended regularly from 1949 to 1962 in Budapest, East Berlin, Bucharest, Warsaw, Moscow, Vienna, and Helsinki. All forty-one of the dance works that won awards for China at these competitions were Chinese Dance choreographies, among them sixteen entries of Han folk dance, seventeen entries of ethnic minority dance, and eight entries of Chinese classical dance (Song 1994, 291–292).<sup>12</sup> At the WFYS competitions, which featured dance delegations from around the world, national and folk dances were especially celebrated, and Chinese Dance appeared alongside many other national and regional dance forms, including African dance, Central Asian and Middle Eastern dance, Eastern European dance, Indian dance, Indonesian dance, Korean dance, Latin American dance, and Soviet ballet (Wilcox 2020).<sup>13</sup> Apart from the WFYS competitions, China also sent touring ensembles abroad regularly during the 1950s and early 1960s, and extant programs from these tours show that the dance programs they featured also consisted entirely of Chinese Dance (Wilcox 2019a).

National dance drama, the choreographic mode in which *Dagger Society* was produced, is a specific format of Chinese Dance whose development began during the mid-1950s and occurred on the basis of the three streams of Chinese Dance discussed above. An early experiment with locally produced dance drama was *Peace Dove* (*Heping ge* 和平鴿),

premiered by the Central Academy of Drama Attached Dance Ensemble in 1950. Criticisms of *Peace Dove's* reliance on ballet and Western modern dance aesthetics led dance experts in search of a more localized form of dance drama (Wilcox 2019a). By the mid-1950s, dance critics were promoting the idea of national dance drama, imagined as both a Chinese counterpart to Soviet ballet and an outgrowth of Chinese opera (Gao 1955). Early national dance drama production teams thus enlisted guidance from both Soviet ballet experts and experts in traditional Chinese theater. For example, the Central Experimental Opera Theater's 1957 production *Magic Lotus Lantern* (*Bao liandeng* 寶蓮燈), widely considered China's first successful large-scale national dance drama, was co-advised by Soviet ballet dancer Viktor Ivanovich Tsaplin and *jingju* actor Li Shaochun 李少春 ("Daxing" 1957).<sup>14</sup> The first large repertoire of national dance dramas, created by ensembles across China, appeared in 1958–1959 during the Great Leap Forward. It included works based on all three streams of Chinese Dance (Han folk dance, ethnic minority dance, and Chinese classical dance), and most incorporated more than one style. Of the dozens of national dance dramas created during this period, three were considered important enough to record on film, one of which was *Dagger Society*.<sup>15</sup>

### Melding Traditions: The Creative Vision Behind *Dagger Society*

*Dagger Society* was the first large-scale dance drama created by the Shanghai Experimental Opera Theater (SEOT), an ensemble formally established in 1956 but whose history began earlier, with the New Peace Travelling Ensemble (Xin'an lüxingtuan 新安旅行團) established in 1935.<sup>16</sup> Like other national dance dramas, *Dagger Society* employed a large creative team that brought together knowledge and experience from a variety of different performing arts fields. Zhang Tuo 張拓, the head of *Dagger Society's* choreography team and vice director of SEOT, was a musical drama specialist who had been involved in the pre-1949 New Yangge movement (Zhang and Chen 1949). In 1951, the New Peace Travelling Ensemble had presented a revised song and dance drama (*gewuju* 歌舞劇) of *Wang Gui and Li Xiangxiang* (王貴与李香香) that Zhang had written and codirected, which some had praised as a positive example of new music-drama (*xin geju* 新歌劇), the genre discussed by Max Bohnenkamp in this volume (Huadong 1951). In the intervening years between *Wang Gui and Li Xiangxiang* and *Dagger Society*, Zhang supervised a field research project on rural folk theater, studied the

Stanislavsky method at the Central Academy of Drama, and participated in a research trip to the Soviet Union to learn about European opera (Zhang 1953; Zhang 1956; “Zhang Tuo”).

The other four members of the *Dagger Society* choreography team were all dance specialists. However, like Zhang, they all had varied artistic backgrounds. Bai Shui 白水 had begun his dance career in 1947 in Shanghai at the China Music and Dance Academy (Zhongguo yuewu xueyuan 中國樂舞學院), a school led by Frontier Dance pioneer Dai Ailian (Feng 2006, 75).<sup>17</sup> In 1955, Bai joined the Beijing Dance School’s first course in Dance Drama Choreography (*wuju biandao xunlian ban* 舞劇編導訓練班) led by Viktor Ivanovich Tsaplin, where he learned to apply Soviet choreographic theory to the creation of national dance drama (Bai 1957). Li Zhonglin 李仲林 and Li Qun 李群, two other members of the *Dagger Society* choreography team, had also been among Bai’s classmates in this course (Feng 2006, 168; Zhu 1957). Li Zhonglin had co-choreographed *Magic Lotus Lantern*, the epoch-making national dance drama of 1957. Both Li Zhonglin and Li Qun had also been members of the New Peace Travelling Ensemble and had performed in Zhang Tuo’s production of *Wang Gui and Li Xiangxiang*, for which *kunqu* actor Wang Chuanqian 汪傳鈞 had served as the dance director (Huadong 1951). The fifth and final member of the choreographic team was Shu Qiao 舒巧, the most experienced of the four dance specialists. She had joined the New Peace Travelling Ensemble in 1944 at the age of eleven, and had worked there until 1951, when she was selected to participate in a special course for dancers at the Central Academy of Drama led by Oriental Dance pioneer Choe Seung-hui (Tian and Li 471). In Choe’s class, Shu had studied Choe’s newly devised curriculum for Chinese classical dance, created with the assistance of *jingju* and *kunqu* actors, as well as Korean classical and folk dance, Southern dance (*Nanfang wu* 南方舞, a style loosely inspired by Indian and Thai dance), Soviet ballet and folk dance, New Dance, improvisation, rhythm, and theoretical courses in dance history, political thought, literature, and music (Gu 1951). During the intervening years between this course and *Dagger Society*, Shu participated in a dance exchange tour to India, Indonesia, and Burma, where she learned to perform dances of each of these countries (Wilcox 2017). Shu had also co-choreographed and performed in “Sword Dance,” one of the first influential works of Chinese classical dance, for which she won an award at the WFYS competition in 1957 in Moscow (Shu 1957; Shanghai shiyan gejuyuan 1959). In addition to being choreographers, three of the four dance specialists on the *Dagger Society* choreography

team also doubled as performers: Bai Shui and Shu Qiao played the roles of Dagger Society leaders, Liu Lichuan and Zhou Xiuying, respectively (although Bai did not play this role in the film version), and Li Zhonglin played the role of the Qing official, Wu Jianzhang.

In *Dagger Society*, the diverse backgrounds of these artists came together to contribute to a new artistic genre. Although all five members of the creative team had significant experience with foreign performance techniques, they showed a strong commitment to localization when creating the movements for *Dagger Society*. Embracing the new concept of national dance drama, they sought to devise a new choreographic language on the basis of local forms, as discussed in detail below. At the same time, however, the creators of *Dagger Society* also borrowed foreign theoretical concepts about the definition of dance and the principles that should be followed when creating dance drama. In two essays published in 1957, after he had already studied for over a year with Tsaplin and just before he began work on *Dagger Society*, choreography team member Bai Shui explained what he saw as the key rules to follow when creating national dance drama. In his explanations, we can see how diverse knowledge systems merged to produce a new vision for dance creation that informed *Dagger Society*.

The first key step for creating national dance drama, Bai argued, was to conduct regular field research. This included spending time in different places, observing everyday life, and learning a diverse array of dance forms. According to Bai, field research was important because it allowed the choreographer to become familiar with the customs and ways of life in different places and avoid reproducing tropes. To illustrate this point, Bai described a common formula for choreographing romantic meetings between lovers, which he argued were used without regard for the time, location, or community in which a story was set. “Audiences find this extremely dull,” Bai complained, “is love really this stereotyped and repetitive?” (Bai 1957, 22). Additionally, he argued, fieldwork could expand one’s knowledge of diverse movement vocabularies, especially if one went beyond simply observing and learned to physically perform the dance movements with one’s own body. “Movements are the language of dance,” Bai wrote. “A choreographer must concretely master all types of different dance movements; the more one masters, the richer one’s accumulated language, and this will greatly benefit creation” (Bai 1957, 23).<sup>18</sup>

Second, Bai stressed the importance of using movement techniques, especially those from existing performance forms, to portray vivid characters. To illustrate this point, Bai recounted a learning experience he

had when creating his first choreography, a solo dance about a PLA soldier who risks his own safety to smash an enemy blockhouse. According to Bai, the piece was supposed to be in the style of Chinese classical dance, but he had “abstained from using many classical dance techniques, fearing that overusing technique would damage the sense of real life and the imagery” (Bai 1957, 23). As a result, when experts watched an early draft of the piece, they felt the story was clear, but the character image did not stand out. “The character was just running back and forth on stage, without specific movements to develop the character’s personality. As a result, the whole piece gave people a bland feeling,” they responded (Bai 1957, 23). In light of this mistake, Bai had reflected upon how ancient heroic characters are portrayed in *jingju*, such as Gao Chong 高寵 in *Overturing the Chariots* (*Tiao huache* 挑滑車), Ren Tanghui 任棠惠 in *Crossroads Inn* (*Sanchakou* 三岔口), and Wu Song 武松 in *Cross Slope* (*Shizipo* 十字坡 / *Dadian* 打店). He concluded that, “These heroic images, if not for their martial postures (*zitai* 姿態), theatrical movements (*shenduan* 身段), and practiced highlights (*jiqiao* 技巧) while crossing swords with the enemy, would not be able to convince the audience that those on stage were truly heroes. This is why after we have seen a theatrical performance, we can still recall them in our minds upon returning home” (Bai 1957, 23). Bai thus resolved to revise his work and introduce more specific actions and dance techniques to bring out his character’s personality and heighten the artistic effect. Regardless of whether a character is modern or ancient, Bai argued, the techniques of Chinese classical dance (drawn largely from *xiqu*) are equally effective for creating vivid character images. Because movement is the expressive medium of dance, Bai reasoned, a good choreographic work must have movement that is artistically compelling. One way to develop such compelling movement, he argued, is to borrow from existing performance techniques.

Third, Bai insisted on the importance of expressing locality through one’s aesthetic choices, while also being sure to use local material creatively and in ways that opened up new possibilities and served the purposes of dance. In another essay responding to the 1957 All-China Festival of Professional Music and Dance Ensembles, Bai and coauthor Zhao Xiuqin 趙秀琴 (another dance drama choreographer) analyzed what they saw as strengths and weaknesses in the festival’s dance program. Although small-scale national dance dramas had been presented from across the country and in all three styles of Chinese dance, Bai and Zhao zeroed in on a collection of works from Sichuan created in the

Chinese classical dance style. Among these, one that had been rather successful, in their view, was *Hibiscus* (*Furonghua* 芙蓉花), while two that had not been successful were *Releasing Pei* (*Fang Pei* 放裴) and *Leaving the Cave to See the View* (*Bie dong guan jing* 別洞觀景).<sup>19</sup> All three productions had taken inspiration from works of Sichuan opera (*chuanju* 川劇), which Bai and Zhao saw as a correct strategy (Bai and Zhao 1957, 1). However, whereas the creators of *Hibiscus* had taken the needs of dance into consideration to creatively adapt the Sichuan opera material, the other two teams had followed a different path. Describing the two unsuccessful works, Bai and Zhao lamented,

[They] simply brought in Chinese opera (*xiqu*), removed the libretto, and then had a choir sing the characters' lines, without carrying out any necessary adaptation and reworking. This is not correct. Typically, the movements in Chinese opera are closely connected to the libretto, and they help illustrate the lines. If you remove the lines, the movements lose their goal. If you require the audience to find explanations for the movement in the choir's singing, that's really difficult. In fact, after seeing those two works, many audience members said they didn't understand it and they found it unclear. So, we think this is not a viable method. (Bai and Zhao 1957, 1–2)

After making this comparison, Bai and Zhao gave one other example of a successful work, a modern-themed short dance drama called *Young Patriot* (*Shaonian aiguo zhe* 少年愛國者) that had been created at the Beijing Dance School under Soviet guidance. Like Bai's earlier solo, this piece had used performance elements from Chinese opera to express "contemporary life" (*xianshi shenghuo* 現實生活), showing that, contrary to the views of some skeptics, Chinese classical dance was indeed an appropriate medium for stories set in the revolutionary era. In their estimation, this type of experiment represented the future of dance drama creation and "proves . . . that dance dramas reflecting contemporary life must be established on our traditional forms" (Bai and Zhao 1957, 2). While traditional forms would be the foundation, new creation would also require they be adapted to suit the needs of a new artistic genre, namely, national dance drama.

### Choreographing History: The Making of *Dagger Society*

The *Dagger Society* creative team followed the ideals Bai had laid out, which reflected a widespread consensus about national dance drama

creation in China at the time. To recap, these ideals were: (1) choreographers should conduct field research to learn about their subject and avoid stereotyped representations, as well as to gain knowledge of diverse movement forms; (2) choreographers should maximize the artistic power of existing movement techniques to create compelling character images; and (3) choreographers should study traditional art forms and then use them in new ways that forward the specific goals of dance creation. According to Zhang Tuo, the *Dagger Society* team was initially given the following task: “to create a large-scale dance drama that would reflect the Shanghai people’s revolutionary struggle” (Zhang 1985, 67). Since they did not yet have a specific story, they conducted field research to try to find one. Zhang writes, “We selected the old city area of Shanghai—today’s Nanshi District (南市區)—as our base, and there we ate, lived, and toiled together with the working people. Making friends with the common laborers, we interviewed them for familiar anecdotes about old Shanghai. We also visited museums that stored historical materials” (Zhang 1985, 68). It was reportedly through this process that Zhang and his colleagues learned about the 1853 Dagger Society revolt. Through local research, they acquired a collection of historical materials about the revolt, which included published documents, official Qing records, reports on foreign involvement, as well as notes from county gazetteers and the learned elite. To supplement the written materials, they also visited the places Dagger Society members had been active to collect folk legends and ballads about them.<sup>20</sup> The female lead character in *Dagger Society* reportedly came from one of these songs gathered in Qingpu county 青浦縣, which told of “The female hero Zhou Xiuying, in her crimson pants and close-fitting shirt, who wielded a broadsword of 120 catties [*sic*] and killed enemies in battle on the Tangwan Bridge (塘灣橋)” (Zhang 1985, 69).

Because of its tragic ending, the historical story of the Dagger Society revolt did not fit well with conventional plots of socialist revolution, which typically ended in success by the revolutionary forces. However, the creative team saw this as an opportunity for innovation. Zhang and his team felt that the most interesting part of the Dagger Society’s experience was not their initial win and takeover of the city but, instead, the fighting spirit they showed by holding out for seventeen months in near starvation conditions and, finally, when unable to make contact with the Taipings, taking on the joint Qing and Western imperial forces alone against all odds. Yet, how could such a story be molded to a revolutionary narrative? As Zhang writes, “There were two choices before us: one was to follow the ‘oppression—resistance—victory’ formula for presenting



peasant revolts. This was the pervasive way of writing this kind of theme since 1949” (Zhang 1985, 69). Clearly, the *Dagger Society* team chose not to follow this convention. The 1960 program note for the final scene reads,

The Dagger Society fights bravely all night, with heavy casualties. After Liu Lichuan pierces Wu Jianzhang, he is tragically hit by the foreign guns; Zhou Xiuying stabs the French officer, driving back the enemy soldiers. Holding high the banner of righteousness, they face toward the sun and continue to advance.

Although the vigorous movement of the people’s revolt is temporarily frustrated, its spark will not go out. Its noble spirit will last forever until, finally, a revolutionary tempest will one day arrive to thoroughly destroy the reactionary regime. (Shanghai shiyan gejuyuan 1960, 4)

At the end of *Dagger Society*, there was no happy resolution, no bright sunshine to cast away the terrible clouds and, ironically, no celebratory dancing. One left only with the quiet reassurance that the “one day” alluded to in the program notes did eventually come. Although this marked a significant departure from the conventions of revolutionary performance at the time, the positive reception of *Dagger Society* shows that the team’s efforts at innovation had succeeded.

One reason for *Dagger Society*’s positive reception was its fresh use of local dance practices. Following Bai’s principles, the team drew on a broad range of local movement languages, while it also leveraged existing theatrical techniques from Chinese opera to create memorable and compelling character images. As a whole, the characters in *Dagger Society* corresponded to role types in Chinese opera. For example, the *Dagger Society*’s elder male leader Liu Lichuan was a mature male (*laosheng* 老生); the female leader Zhou Xiuying was a martial female (*wudan* 武旦); the traitorous Qing magistrate Wu Jianzhang was a mixture of robed male clown (*paozi chou* 袍子丑) and posture-painted-face (*jiazi hualian* 架子花臉); and the younger male *Dagger Society* leader Pan Qixiang was a martial male (*wusheng* 武生). The dancers were able to deploy these stage techniques because of their years of training by *kunqu* actors, who had worked closely with both SEOT and its predecessor, the New Peace Travelling Ensemble. Shu Qiao, the member of the creative team who played the heroine Zhou Xiuying, recalled in an interview that during the early and mid-1950s she and other dancers in SEOT had received



Figure 6.2. Dagger Society leaders Zhou Xiuying and Pan Qixiang demonstrate the use of movement postures derived from Chinese opera. From the national dance drama, *Dagger Society*, performed here by the Shanghai Experimental Opera Theatre. Courtesy of Shu Qiao.

the majority of their training from *kunqu* actors (Shu 2015).<sup>21</sup> They had learned full opera scenes, she explained, including singing and speaking parts, and they had also studied opera acrobatics (*tanzi gong* 毯子功) and combat techniques (*bazi gong* 把子功) (Shu 2015). The numerous battle scenes in *Dagger Society* made extensive use of these latter two sets of skills, and as a result the production had, in addition to the five members of its choreography team, a dedicated choreographer named in the program as “director of martial techniques” (*wugong zhidao* 武功指導) (Shanghai shiyan gejuyuan 1960, 5). This role was filled by *jingju* actor Xu Jianhao 徐劍豪 (a.k.a. Gai Chunlai 盖春来), a specialist in martial male roles, which traditionally use a large amount of acrobatics and stage combat.

Apart from Chinese opera-derived movement, *Dagger Society* also included choreography inspired by other movement styles, including Han folk dance, martial arts (*wushu* 武術), and Western theatrical dance.

Movements from regional Han folk performance play an important role in scene two, when the Dagger Society is celebrating its initial victory and takeover of the city. Historically, the real Dagger Society membership included large numbers of migrants originally from southeastern Fujian (Li 2012). Thus, it is fitting that one of the two major folk dance forms that appear in this scene is the “Large-Drum Parasol Dance” (*dagu liang-san wu* 大鼓涼傘舞), from the southern Fujian area around Quanzhou. According to Zhang, this was inspired by “a ritual dance used in festivals in honor of local deities (*yingshen saihui* 迎神賽會), with powerful movements and a martial energy” (Zhang 1985, 78). In the *Dagger Society* film, it appears at 19:44 and features female dancers carrying fringe-lined sun umbrellas while male dancers beat large two-sided circular drums worn on the front of their bodies, similar to the bass drum in American marching bands (*Xiaodao hui* 1961).<sup>22</sup> Another dance inspired by Han folk sources immediately follows this, featuring women in long pastel skirts playing small hand-held drums about the size of ping-pong mallets. This dance, known as the “Flower Fragrance Drum Dance” (*huaxiang guwu* 花香鼓舞) was, according to Zhang, based on material collected during fieldwork in Yangzhou, a city in Jiangsu Province to the northwest of Shanghai (Zhang 1985, 78). A third section inspired by Han folk sources is the “Shield Dance” (*dunpai wu* 盾牌舞), which appears in scene four. It is a night scene in which Dagger Society members rescue a group of local people who have been caught by Qing guards while attempting to smuggle grain into the Dagger Society headquarters. In the film, the dance begins at 38:30 and shows men and women in line formations, the men carrying trapezoid-shaped shields painted with lion faces. Zhang describes this as a dance based on material the team collected in Wenzhou in eastern Zhejiang and explains that it “evolved from the soldier exercises for resisting Japanese pirates from the time of Qi Jiguang (1528–1588)” (Zhang 1985, 79). He notes the powerful actions and strict formations with many changes that characterized this dance style, which also appear in the film. Movements from martial arts appear in “Bow Dance” (*gong wu* 弓舞), a co-ed group dance choreographed by Shu Qiao that appears in scene six, which is one of the most famous sequences in the entire *Dagger Society* production. Beginning at 53:13 in the film, this dance takes place just after Pan has gone to Nanjing to seek help from the Taipings (a mission that will prove fatal), and the season has turned from fall to winter. It shows members of the Dagger Society stoically training with bows, under Zhou Xiuying’s direction, as bombs are heard exploding just outside the compound walls. Apart from Han



Figure 6.3. Dagger Society members perform “Shield Dance,” a choreography adapted from Wenzhou folk performance. From the national dance drama *Dagger Society* that premiered in 1959, performed by the Shanghai Experimental Opera Theatre. Photographer: Wu Yinbo. Originally published in *Renmin huabao* (*People’s Pictorial*) 1960, no. 16, p. 24. Courtesy of China Foto Bank.

folk dance and martial arts, choreography inspired by Western theatrical dance in the styles of ballroom and fencing are also used to portray the British, French, and American characters in *Dagger Society*. These appear during scene three, which takes place largely in the British consulate (*Xiaodao hui* 1961).

Including such a wide variety of dances in the production allowed the choreographers of *Dagger Society* not only to portray vivid characters and reflect different groups and localities but also to create a production that was truly novel in both narrative content and aesthetic form. Given the predominance of Chinese opera-derived movement in the production, the approach taken to adapting this movement vocabulary was critical to its success. As Bai had written in his discussion of the new dance dramas adapted from Sichuan opera, creating national dance drama could not simply mean removing the singing from Chinese opera. Rather, for a

work to be effective as dance, it needed to make improvements on the existing opera movements, so that they would work as stand-alone choreography. Reflecting on the team's motivations for developing the scene "Shield Dance," for example, Zhang explained that this was aimed at creating more variety in the combat scenes, which otherwise drew most of their techniques from Chinese opera. "After all, dance drama is not Chinese opera," Zhang wrote, emphasizing the need to be creative and constantly search for new material (Zhang 1985, 79).

Apart from choreography, another important way that *Dagger Society* offered a successful example of aesthetic innovation was its music. Contemporary reviewers universally praised *Dagger Society's* original score, composed by Shang Yi 商易. The score used a mixed orchestra that highlighted Chinese musical instruments, including the *suona* 唢呐 (a piercing clarinet-like instrument), *pipa* 琵琶 (a strummed or plucked lute), and *dizi* 笛子 (the bamboo flute) (Zhong 1960). One music critic argued that the score's success in using these instruments set a new standard for national dance drama, proving wrong people who claimed that only Western orchestras could accompany dance drama (Mao 1960). Apart from using local instruments, the score also incorporated elements from a number of different musical systems. For example, Zhou Xiuying's theme was based on a Boatman's chantey, Liu's on a famous Guangdong melody, and the Qing troop's theme on *jingju* gong and drum percussion, while a linking method common in Chinese opera was used to connect the various components into a synthetic whole (Huang 1979). All in all, what made *Dagger Society* a successful work of national dance drama was that it conveyed a politically important message by using local aesthetic material adapted into a new and innovative form.

## Conclusion

The project of creating national dance drama that emerged during the latter half of the 1950s generated a vibrant new art form that is still widely practiced in China and other parts of the world today (Wilcox 2019a). At the same time, its goals also worked at cross purposes in some ways. On the one hand, many who had advocated for the creation of Chinese Dance as a new stage form during the early socialist period did so with the express hope of developing an artistic form that could be shared with audiences in other countries and represent China to the world (Wilcox 2018c). With the success of Chinese dance choreography at the WFYS competitions in Eastern Europe between 1949 and 1962

and the touring of Chinese Dance delegations abroad extensively during the same period, this goal was in many ways achieved. The arrival of national dance drama, however, added new complications. Between 1962 and 1968, a hiatus in the WFYS programming left few remaining international venues in which Chinese Dance could be presented as an equal with other global dance genres. At the same time, non-Western countries who toured dance ensembles in China were increasingly bringing ballets, rather than national dance productions, as representatives of their countries' national culture. This was the case, for example, with tours by Japan's Matsuyama Ballet (*Songshan baleiwutuan* 松山芭蕾舞團) in 1958 and 1964 and by the National Ballet of Cuba in 1961 (Wilcox 2019a). However, China's dance field remained committed to the idea that national dance drama, rather than ballet, was the best representation of the cultural values of socialist China.

National dance dramas like *Dagger Society* were created with the goal of telling complex stories through dance, specifically by using local dance languages that would be enjoyable and comprehensible to Chinese audiences. Introducing *Dagger Society* in 1959, Bai Shui and Li Zhonglin boasted of how they had incorporated not just the movements of Chinese opera but also specific storytelling devices that would help make the new format of dance drama and complex historical plot more easily understood for Chinese viewers. In scene two, when the Dagger Society members disguised themselves in order to surprise the Qing official Wu and rescue Dagger Society member Pan from his custody, for example, they borrowed the operatic narrative convention known as "breaking into the execution ground to rescue a condemned person" (*jie fachang* 劫法場) (Bai and Zhong 1959). Similarly, when the Dagger Society defeats the Qing troops and initially captures Shanghai, Pan steals an official seal to illustrate this victory, another operatic device. And, in scene three, when the Dagger Society leaders visit the British Consulate and Pan uses two swords to cast all of the Western troops' swords to the ground, they borrow from the opera episode "Feast at Hongmen" (*Hongmen yan* 鴻門宴). Such conventions, Bai and Li argued, "are all common in traditional theater, and audiences are very familiar with them" (Bai and Zhong 1959).

What happens, however, when national dance drama begins to travel abroad too? We know that in 1961, the Central Experimental Opera Theater toured *Dagger Society* to the USSR and Poland (Li 2010). Zhang reports that in 1964, the Matsuyama Ballet may have also performed it in Japan (Zhang 1985, 67). If this was the case, how would such audiences respond? Would the very qualities that had been celebrated as essential

to national dance drama—namely, its local choreographic languages—become a limitation to its capacity for worldly circulation? Perhaps this is one part of why, beginning in 1964, the creative process for theatrical dance performance in China took a dramatic new turn, away from national dance drama and toward revolutionary ballet.

## Notes

1. On *Dagger Society*, see Bai and Zhong (1959). On the historical Dagger Society revolt, see Li (2012).
2. For a recent study of the Taipings, see Platt (2012).
3. Program notes in Shanghai shiyan gejuyuan (1960), 4.
4. For a full video, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VL9FU9iNsMg>. Last accessed July 15, 2020.
5. For a historical overview of this period, see Karl (2010).
6. To a large extent, this impression of the United States was accurate. See, for example, Westad (2005).
7. All translations from Chinese are mine.
8. For more on dance in China in late imperial times and the early twentieth century, see Wang and Long (1999) and Liu et al. (2010). On dance in early and medieval China, see Wang (2001).
9. This term was disregarded after 1949, replaced by either *wudao* (舞蹈, dance) or *wudao yishu* (舞蹈藝術, dance art).
10. I capitalize “Chinese Dance” to distinguish this modern artistic genre from the general term “Chinese dance” (*Zhongguo wudao* 中國舞蹈), which refers to all styles and genres of dance in China throughout history.
11. Chinese classical dance eventually developed to include styles not based on *xiqu*, such as Dunhuang and Han-Tang. See Wilcox (2012b; 2019a).
12. This number does not include works by Chinese opera ensembles that also won awards in these dance competitions.
13. This observation is based on a review of dance photographs published in *Festival* issues from the 1951, 1953, 1955, 1957, 1959, and 1962. Accessed in the World Festival of Youth and Students Collection ARCH01667, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.
14. For more on this ensemble, see Wilcox (2019a) and Luo Liang’s chapter in this volume.
15. The other two were the above-mentioned *Magic Lotus Lantern* and an ethnic minority-themed work, *Five Red Clouds*. For more on these works, see Wilcox (2018c; 2019a).
16. Program notes in Shanghai shiyan gejuyuan (1960). Like many performance ensembles in the early PRC, SEOT inherited membership from earlier ensembles, merged with existing ensembles, and went through several name changes. The oldest previously existing group incorporated into SEOT was the New Peace Traveling Ensemble, a CCP-affiliated institution originally established in 1935 (Shanghai Shiyan Gejuyuan 1960). In 1953, the immediate predecessor

sor to SEOT was established in Shanghai as the East China Experimental Opera and Dance Drama Ensemble (Huadong shiyan gejuwujutuan 華東實驗歌劇舞劇團). In March, 1955, this ensemble's name was changed to the Shanghai Experimental Song and Dance Theater (Shanghai shiyan gewu juyuan 上海實驗歌舞劇團), and in October of 1956 it was changed again to SEOT. See Li et al. (2001), 988.

17. Feng gives the name of the school as “Shanghai Music and Dance Academy,” but this is likely an error.

18. For more on the central role of fieldwork in Chinese socialist dance creation, see Wilcox (2012a).

19. *Releasing Pei* is based on a section from the ghost play *Li Huiniang* (see Greene in this volume).

20. A collection of such stories published nearly three decades earlier suggests that these songs may have likely existed. See Yu (1930).

21. She specifically mentioned three members of the renowned *chuan*-generation (*chuanzibei* 傳字輩): Hua Chuanhao 華傳浩, Fang Chuanling 方傳鈴, and Wang Chuanqian, who had worked on *Wang Gui and Li Xiangxiang* and *Sword Dance*.

22. For the video link, see note 4.

## Works Cited

- Baifeng chaoyang* 百鳳朝陽 (*Hundred Phoenixes Face the Sun*). 1959. Dir. Chen Huaikai 陳懷皚. Beijing: Beijing Film Studio.
- Bai Shui 白水. 1957. “Xuexi wuju biandao yishu de yixie tihui” 學習舞劇編導藝術的一些體會 (Some Experiences from Studying the Art of Dance Drama Choreography). *Wuxiao tongxun* 舞校通訊 (*Dance School News*), no. 1: 22–24.
- Bai Shui 白水 and Zhao Xiuqin 趙秀琴. 1957. “Women dui ‘fazhan minzu wuju’ de yixie kanfa” 我們對“發展民族舞劇”的一些看法 (Some of Our Thoughts on “Developing National Dance Drama”). *Wudao congkan* 舞蹈叢刊 (*Dance Series*), no. 3: 1–3.
- Bai Shui 白水 and Zhong Lin 仲林. 1959. “Wuju Xiaodao hui de chuanguo” 舞劇《小刀會》的創作 (Creating Dance Drama *Dagger Society*). *Shanghai xiju* 上海戲劇 (*Shanghai Theater*) 2: 32.
- Caidie fenfei* 彩蝶紛飛 (*Colored Butterflies Fluttering About*). 1963. Dir. Zhu Jinming 朱今明. Beijing: Beijing Film Studio.
- “Daxing minzu wuju *Bao lian deng jijiang shangyan*” 大型民族舞劇《寶蓮燈》即將上演 (Large-Scale National Dance Drama *Magic Lotus Lantern* Soon to be Performed). 1957. *Guangming ribao* 光明日報 (*Guangming Daily*) August 3.
- Feng Shuangbai 馮雙白, ed., 2006. *Zhongguo wudaojia da cidian* 中國舞蹈家大辭典. Beijing: Zhongguo wenlian chubanshe.
- Gao Di'an 高地安. 1955. “Xuexi Sulian wuju yishu de jingyan, chuanguo women minzu de wuju” 學習蘇聯舞劇藝術的經驗·創作我們民族的舞劇 (Learn from the Dance Drama Experience of the Soviet Union, Create Our National Dance Drama). *Guangming ribao* 光明日報 (*Guangming Daily*) February 19.
- Gu Yewen 顧也文, ed. 1951. *Chaoxian wudaojia Cui Chengxi* 朝鮮舞蹈家崔承喜 (*Korean Dance Artist Choe Seung-hui*). Shanghai: Wenlian chubanshe.



- Huadong wenhuabu xinlü gewutuan 華東文化部新歌舞團. 1951. *Wang Gui yu Li Xiangxiang* 王貴與李香香 (*Wang Gui and Li Xiangxiang*). Performance program dated March-April 1951, Shanghai. The Sophia Delza Papers, Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.
- Huang Ling 黃凌. 1979. “Tantan geming lishi wuju *Xiaodao hui* de yinyue chuanguo” 談談革命歷史舞劇《小刀會》的音樂創作 (Discussing the Musical Creation of Revolutionary Historical Dance Drama *Dagger Society*). *Nanyi xueyuan* 南藝學院 (*Southern Art Academy*) no. 2: 100–109.
- Jones, Andrew F. 2001. *Yellow Music: Media Culture and Colonial Modernity in the Chinese Jazz Age*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Karl, Rebecca. 2010. *Mao Zedong and the Twentieth-Century World: A Concise History*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Li, Xiaobing, ed. 2012. “Small Sword Society (1853–1855),” in *China at War: An Encyclopedia*, 413–416. Santa Barbara, Denver, and Oxford: ABC-CLIO.
- Li Taicheng 李太成 et al., eds. 2001. *Shanghai wenhua yishu zhi* 上海文化藝術志 (*Shanghai Culture and Art Gazetteer*). Shanghai: Shanghai shehui kexue yueyuan chubanshe.
- Liu Qingyi 劉青弋 et al., eds. 2010. *Zhongguo wudao tongshi* 中國舞蹈通史 (*A General History of Dance in China*), Volumes 1–10. Shanghai: Shanghai yinyue chubanshe.
- Liu Zhiming 劉芝明. 1957. “Jicheng chuantong, chuanguo shehuizhuyi de minzu de xin gewu yishu” 繼承傳統，創造社會主義的民族的新歌舞藝術 (Inherit Tradition, Create Socialist National New Song and Dance art). *Wudao congkan* 舞蹈叢刊 (*Dance Series*) no. 1: 1–12.
- Li Xiaoxiang 李小祥, et al., eds. 2010. *Zhongguo geju wuju yuan yuanshi* 中國歌劇舞劇院院史 (*History of the China Opera and Dance Drama Theater*). Hong Kong: Tianma chuban youxian gongsi.
- Ma, Nan. 2015. “Dancing into Modernity: Kinesthesia, Narrative, and Revolutions in Modern China, 1900–1978.” PhD diss, University of Wisconsin, Madison.
- Ma, Nan. 2016. “Transmediating Kinesthesia: Wu Xiaobang and Modern Dance in China, 1929–1939,” *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 28, no. 1: 129–173.
- Mao Yuan 茅沅. 1960. “Tan wuju *Xiaodao hui*” 談舞劇《小刀會》(On the Dance Drama *Dagger Society*). *Renmin yinyue* 人民音樂 (*People’s Music*), no. 7: 62–63.
- Platt, Stephen. 2012. *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom: China, the West, and the Epic Story of the Taiping Civil War*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Sergeant, Harriet. 1991. *Shanghai*. London: Cape, 1991.
- “Shanghai huaju jie zuzhi dahuichuan” 上海話劇界組織大會串 (Shanghai’s Spoken Drama World Organizes a Series of Shows). 1959. *Guangming ribao* 光明日報 (*Guangming Daily*) August 12: 2.
- Shanghai shiyan gejuyuan 上海實驗歌劇院, ed. 1959. *Jian wu* 劍舞 (*Sword Dance*). Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe.
- Shanghai shiyan gejuyuan 上海實驗歌劇院. 1960. *Xiaodao hui* 小刀會 (*Dagger Society*). Performance program. Beijing. Beijing Dance Academy Archives.
- Shu Qiao 舒巧. 1957. “Guanyu ‘jian wu’ 關於劍舞 (On “Sword dance”). *Wudao congkan* 舞蹈叢刊 (*Dance Series*) no. 1 (May): 33–35.
- Shu Qiao 舒巧. 2015. Interview with the author, Shanghai. August 13.

- Song Tianyi 宋天儀. 1994. *Zhongwai biaoyan yishu jiaoliu shilue, 1949–1992* 中外表演藝術交流史略, 1949–1992 (*A Brief History of China's Foreign Performance Art Exchanges, 1949–1992*). Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe.
- Tian Jing 田靜 and Li Baicheng 李百成, eds. 2005. *Xin Zhongguo wudao yishujia de yaolan* 新中國舞蹈藝術家的搖籃 (*New China's Cradle of Dance Artists*). Beijing: Zhongguo wenlian chubanshe.
- Tong Yan 仝妍. 2013. *Minguo shiqi wudao yanjiu 1912–1949* 民國時期舞蹈研究 1912–1949 (*Research on Dance in the Republican Era, 1912–1949*). Beijing: Zhongyang minzu daxue chubanshe.
- Wang Kefen 王克芬. 2001. *Zhonghua wudao tushi* 中華舞蹈圖史 (*Chinese Dance: An Illustrated History*). Taipei: Wenjin Publishers.
- Wang Kefen 王克芬 and Long Yinpei 隆荫培. 1999. *Zhongguo jinxindai dangdai wudao fazhanshi* 中國近現代當代舞蹈發展史 (*History of Dance Development in Modern and Contemporary China*). Beijing: Renmin yinyue chubanshe.
- Westad, Odd Arne. 2005. *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*. Cambridge University Press.
- Wilcox, Emily. 2012a. “Dancers Doing Fieldwork: Socialist Aesthetics and Bodily Experience in the People’s Republic of China.” *Journal for the Anthropological Study of Human Movement* 17, no. 2: Electronic.
- Wilcox, Emily. 2012b. “Han-Tang *Zhongguo Gudianwu* and the Problem of Chineseness in Contemporary Chinese Dance: Sixty Years of Controversy.” *Asian Theatre Journal* 29, no.1: 206–232.
- Wilcox, Emily. 2016. “Beyond Internal Orientalism: Dance and Nationality Discourse in the Early People’s Republic of China, 1949–1954.” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 75, no. 2: 363–386.
- Wilcox, Emily. 2017. “Performing Bandung: China’s Dance Diplomacy with India, Indonesia, and Burma, 1953–1962,” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 18, no. 4: 518–539.
- Wilcox, Emily. 2018a. “Dynamic Inheritance: Representative Works and the Authoring of Tradition in Chinese Dance.” *Journal of Folklore Research* 55, no. 1: 77–111.
- Wilcox, Emily. 2018b. “Crossing Over: Choi Seunghee’s Pan-Asianism in Revolutionary Time,” *The Journal of Society for Dance Documentation and History* 51 (December): 65–97.
- Wilcox, Emily. 2018c. “The Postcolonial Blind Spot: Chinese Dance in the Era of Third World-ism, 1949–1965.” *positions: asia critique* 26(4) (November 2018): 781–816.
- Wilcox, Emily. 2019a. *Revolutionary Bodies: Chinese Dance and the Socialist Legacy*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.
- Wilcox, Emily. 2019b. “Dance in Wartime China: Liang Lun’s Choreographic Migrations of the 1940s,” *Journal of Society for Dance Documentation and History* 52 (March): 45–75.
- Wilcox, Emily. 2020. “When Folk Dance Was Radical: Cold War *Yangge*, World Youth Festivals, and Overseas Chinese Leftist Culture in the 1950s and 1960s.” *China Perspectives* 120, no. 1: 33–42.
- “Wuyong: Dongnan nüzi tiyu zhuanmen xuexiao zhi wuyong” 舞踊：東南女子體育專門學校之舞踊 (Dance: Dance at the Southeast Professional Athletic School for Girls). 1929. *Jindai funü* 近代婦女 (*Modern Woman*), no. 10: 5.

- Xiaodao hui* 小刀會 (*Dagger Society*). 1961. Dir. Ye Ming 葉明. Shanghai: Shanghai Tianma Film Studio.
- Yamazaki, Kazuko. 2001. "Nihon Buyo: Classical Dance of Modern Japan." PhD diss, Indiana University.
- Yeh, Catherine. 2016. "Experimenting with Dance Drama: Peking Opera Modernity, Kabuki Theater Reform and the Denishawn's Tour of the Far East." *Journal of Global Theatre History* 1, no. 2: 28–37.
- Yeh, Catherine. 2017. "Mei Lanfang, the Denishawn Dancers, and World Theater." In *A New Literary History of Modern China*, edited by David Wang. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Yeh, Catherine. 2020. "Mei Lanfang and Modern Dance: Transcultural Innovation in Peking Opera, 1910s-1920s." In *Corporeal Politics: Dancing East Asia*, edited by Katherine Mezur and Emily Wilcox. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- You Huihai 游惠海. 1960. "Zhongguo renmin fandi douzheng de yingxiong zitai" 中國人民反帝鬥爭的英雄姿態 (The Heroic Posture of the Chinese People's Anti-Imperialist Struggle). *Xiju bao* 戲劇報 (*Theater Gazette*), no. 10: 13–14.
- Yu Qiongyao 余瓊瑤. 1930. "Funü zhi leyuan: guanyu Xiaodao hui de geyao" 婦女之樂園: 關於小刀會的歌謠 (Women's Playground: Folk Songs about the Dagger Society). *Ziluolan* 紫羅蘭 (*Violet*) 4, no. 15: 7–9.
- Zhang Tuo 張拓. 1953. "Renzhen xiang minjian gewu yishu xuexi" 認真向民間歌舞藝術學習 (Earnestly Learn from Folk Song and Dance Art). *Wenyi yuebao* 文藝月報 (*Arts Monthly*), no. 4: 19–20.
- Zhang Tuo 張拓. 1956. "Women shi zen xuexi Sitannisilafusiji tixi de" 我們是怎學習斯坦尼斯拉夫斯體系的 (How We Learned the Stanislavski System). *Xiju bao* 戲劇報 (*Theater Gazette*), no. 4: 36.
- Zhang Tuo 張拓. 1985. "'Xiaodao hui' chuanguo de lishi huigu" 《小刀會》創作的歷史回顧 (Historical Account of the Creation of *Dagger Society*). In *Zhongguo yishu yanjiuyuan* 中國藝術研究院 (China Arts Research Academy). *Wudao wuju chuanguo jingyan wenji* 舞蹈舞劇創作經驗文集 (*Collected Writings on the Creation Experience of Dances and Dance Dramas*), 67–79. Beijing: Renmin yinyue chubanshe.
- "Zhang Tuo" 張拓. 2018. Shanghai shi difangzhi bangongshi 上海市地方誌辦公室 (Shanghai Municipal Records Office). Available at <http://shtong.gov.cn>, accessed April 30, 2018.
- Zhang Tuo 張拓 and Chen Ming 陳明. 1949. "Xin yangge de changshi" 新秧歌的嘗試 (Attempts in New Yangge). *Xinhua yuekan* 新華月刊 (*New China Monthly*) 1, no. 1: 276–279.
- Zhong Er 眾耳. 1960. "Minzu wuju you yi kexi de shouhuo" 民族舞劇又一可喜的收穫 (Another Achievement Worth Celebrating in National Dance Drama). *Guangming ribao* 光明日報 (*Guangming Daily*) July 30.
- Zhu Liren 朱立人. 1957. "Paiyan zhong de jige wuju" 排演中的幾個舞劇 (Some Dance Dramas in Rehearsal). *Wuxiao tongxun* 舞校通訊 (*Dance School News*), no. 1:12.