# Taking the Lead: Engaging the 'West' on the Dance Floor

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The following work is in compliance with the Honor Code of the Colorado College.

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# Introduction

Of the many forms of dance worldwide from ballet, to bollywood, to hip-hop, and many more, ballroom dancing fascinates me most. While my experience lies mainly in the social realm of ballroom dances, I have been an avid social/ballroom dancer for about two years. When I began dancing, I mainly watched due to my lack of skill. It amazed me to see people weaving in between beats and spontaneously creating beautiful choreography without words. Each dance contains a basic step, and some dances include counts for those steps, but how they are combined can be endless.

Social ballroom joins two people to create a one-time only piece and cannot be done without a partner. Ballroom[1] is divided into two categories, competitive and social, with a third category for dances only done in social ballroom. The categories follow in the chart on the next page.[2] In competitive ballroom, couples choreograph routines, and perform for an overall score. In social ballroom, dancers meet in a community setting to participate in dance events as a pastime or for leisure. Ballroom dancing covers a vast amount of partner dances, with their own histories and cultural contexts. For the sake of this thesis, I will not focus on all of these dances. I will mainly make references to the tango, waltz, and foxtrot. These dances are often mentioned in texts as being popular, or dances that people need to know in order to properly participate in a social dance setting.

| Competitive Ballroom Dances | | Social Ballroom Dances | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Modern/ Smooth/ Standard* | *Latin/Rhythm* | *Street/Club* | *Folk/Ethnic?* |
| *Waltz* | Pas a Doble | Hustle | Polka |
| *Tango* | Rhumba/Bolero | Salsa | |
| *Viennese Waltz* | Cha-Cha | Mambo | |
| *Foxtrot* | Samba | Merengue | |
| Quickstep | Jive/East Coast Swing | West Coast Swing | |
| | | Nightclub 2 Step | |

Table 1 displays the categories of ballroom dance and the dances under each genre.

The inspiration for my thesis came from two sources: the Japanese film *Shall We Dansu?* and my dancing experiences when I studied abroad in Japan. Before leaving the United States, I thought it would be nearly impossible to find good social dance scenes, but to my amazement, every form of dance one could think of was present and very well attended. For almost five months I had minimal physical contact with my host family or Japanese friends, but I could go to a lesson and dance in close embrace with strangers to the slow tunes of blues. I wondered what made ballroom dancing different. What does ballroom offer its Japanese participants? The nature of ballroom dancing contrasts heavily with Japanese cultural opinion of touch and physical interaction between two individuals, particularly men and women. With this question in mind, I decided to focus on the history of ballroom dancing in Japan as my topic.

Chapter 1 presents a condensed history of traditional Japanese dances, a short history of balls and ballroom dancing in general, and ballroom dancing's introduction to

Japan. This sets the scene as to why ballroom entered Japan, how ballroom differed from traditional Japanese dances, and what purpose(s) ballroom served for its Japanese participants. Contrasting heavily with the folk and theatrical dances of the Edo period, ballroom dancing premiered during the rapid modernization/westernization of the Meiji Restoration (1868-1912). Aesthetically, Japanese and ballroom dancing have some similarities. However, ballroom dancing, upon its introduction to Japan, did not reflect anything they had seen or known before in their own culture. There is no equivalent to ballroom in traditional Japanese dance, and, while some dances can be performed in groups or in pairs, someone choreographs the routine and the performers have very little, if any contact. While there were folk and religious dances in Japan, professionally trained people performed these dances, not the everyday commoner. This is not to say recreational dancing did not exist, but dances that did have public participation did not call for partners and were only done on special occasions, such as the *bon* festival (described in Chapter 1). Additionally, ballroom dancing as a social pastime or entertainment added a new dynamic in Japanese society. Ballroom diminished the divide between participant and observer. It was at once both refined and vulgar, in the sense that it brought men and women together physically, spiritually, and mentally and called them to create something as equals together.

Chapter 2 jumps ahead to the Taisho (1912-1926) and early-Showa (1926-1945) eras, examining the society under which ballroom re-emerges as a pastime for middle-class consumers. From the dancehalls to the numerous amounts of dance clubs and dance instructors that began to appear in pre-war Japan, ballroom became the "en vogue" of social culture, as did many other western goods. After the Great Kanto Earthquake in

1923, Tokyo began growing like never before. More people began leaving their natal dwellings and extended families to come to the city and partake in the up and growing economy. New middle-class men and women could now afford western goods; and for the first time Japanese citizens, not just the elite, shift slightly away from tradition and embody the concept of what they perceived to be modern/western.

Chapter 3 analyzes how ballroom dancing can be used to engage in cultural play with an imagined 'West'. The phrase "imagined 'West'" refers to Occidentalism and Orientalism. In the case of Orientalism, westerners make vast generalizations of all Asian nations, peoples, and cultures under the umbrella heading labeled the Orient. Westerners[3] then use these bullet point characteristics to compare themselves to these stereotypes and draw conclusions. Occidentalism reverses the process of Orientalism when peoples of non-European nations clump together all European nations and people, and from these stereotypes discern what it means to be "western." To study how ballroom becomes an alternate reality and a space for the 'West' and Japan to interact, I analyze the movie *Shall We Dansu?*, Karatsu's "Cultural Absorption of Ballroom Dancing in Japan," and Goldstein-Gidoni/Daliot-Bul's article "'Shall We *Dansu*?': Dancing with the 'West' in contemporary Japan" to address the issue of processing a non-native cultural importation and what partaking in ballroom dancing (the foreign import) does for its participants.

My overarching point in this thesis is that in Japan, ballroom dancing initially began as a means to facilitate cultural connections and interactions between the Japanese upper-class and western elites residing in and visiting Japan, and later in time as a western commodity to be consumed by the emerging middle-class. Despite these uses of ballroom as a hallmark or commodity of the West, it also functioned as a third space of

liberation from Japanese cultural standards on an individual level, especially for women, and a different manifestation of the Self through the borrowed cultural import of ballroom dancing, simultaneously making ballroom both foreign and domestic.

## INTRODUCTION ENDNOTES

[1] Throughout this paper I will use ballroom dancing and ballroom interchangeably. Both of these phrases refer to ballroom dancing.

[2] Modern/smooth/standard styles are traveling dances, this means that couples move in closed-position and travel counterclockwise around the dance floor. In Latin/rhythm styles couples mostly remain in the place and travel very little throughout the dance. Couples hold a relaxed position, compared to the more rigid upper-body of modern/smooth/standard dances and the steps are much quicker (Bosse pp. 30-31). This chart was taken from Joanna Bosse's article, "Whiteness and the Performance of Race in American Ballroom Dance" (30). For citation, refer to works cited.

[3] This refers to people of European descent or European/Caucasian Americans.

# Chapter 1

# From *Nihon Buyō* to the Ballroom:
## The Politics of Dance from the 17th to the 19th Century

The landscapes under which dance thrived differed greatly from the Edo Period[1] (1603-1868) to the Meiji Era (1868-1912). The breakdown of court authority resulted in a clamor for power among military factions who mostly governed political affairs over sections of Japan. This resulted in a hundred year warring period as the fight for political domination ran its course (Brandon 66). In the end, the court elites lost the battle and power turned over to the military. During the Edo period, the Tokugawa shogunate and their descendants ruled over a mostly unified Japan using a grand feudalistic structure and martial law to govern over its citizens (Sansom 458). With the shogun's reign came a time of unbroken peace and seclusion[2] from the rest of the world for over two hundred years. During this time of near-seclusion to the outside world, Japanese culture flourished and came into its own.

### The Beginnings of Nihon Buyō [3]

The *Kojiki* (Records of Ancient Matters), a native chronicle produced in the eighth century, describes a dance performed by the goddess Ame no Uzume no Mikoto to coax the sun goddess Amaterasu out of the Rock-cave of Heaven (de Bary, et al. 13; 24-5). Japan's oldest dance form, *kagura*,[4] emerged from this legend (Waterhouse, 3: 73). As the story goes, Amaterasu's brother Susa-no-o caused many calamities to fall upon his sister.[5] Frustrated by her brother's rude acts, Amaterasu secluded herself in the Rock-

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cave of Heaven. Ame no Uzume performed a dance on an inverted wooden tub in front of the cave, which eventually enticed Amaterasu out of hiding (de Bary, et al. 25).

For the people of this time, dance acted as a gateway between humans and the gods, so some of the earliest dance forms derive from the ceremonial dances[6] created by Shinto priests and priestesses. *Kagura* represented power and connected priests and priestesses (referred to as *miko*[7]) to the spirits. *Miko* performed *kagura* as a way to express the will of the gods, empower the prayers of their followers, and lay departed spirits to rest (Gunji 81).

In addition to *kagura*, many dance styles developed from the span of ancient Japan to early modern Japan. From the seventh century to the early half of the Heian period (794-1185), dances and songs from China, India, and Korea were imported to Japan, three significant dances being *gigaku* (a masked Buddhist ritual), *bugaku*, and *sangaku* (mime and acrobatic entertainment) (Gunji 84). These dances were performed at the Japanese court and elements of these dances were eventually fused together with indigenous entertainment to produce a style known as *gagaku*, which is preserved to this day in a special section of the imperial household (Gunji 84). Dancing also flourished during the medieval period;[8] dances present during these times were *ennen, furyu odori, kowaka mai, kyogen komai*, and *dengaku*.[9] The notable styles derived from these dances are *Noh* drama and *Kabuki* theater, which still exist today as an important part of traditional Japanese performing art.

Not everyone participated in the dances mentioned in the above paragraphs; many of these dances were imbued with pre-existing notions of class (i.e. upper and lower class

entertainment). As we will see, the concept of dance appropriate for different levels of society continues even in ballroom dancing, as ballroom evolves from an elite to a middle-class pastime.

| | Religious | Secular |
|---|---|---|
| Ga (雅) *(Elegant, refined)* | Gigaku (技楽) | Bugaku (舞楽) Kowaka mai (幸若舞) Sangaku (散楽) |
| Zoku (俗) *(Common, rustic, crude)* | Ennen (延年舞) | Dengaku* (田楽) Kyogen komai (狂言小舞) Furyu odori (浮流踊り) |

Table 2: An asterisk designates a dance that can be religious in nature as well as secular.

During the Edo period, early forms of *kabuki* came into being and became a popular form of entertainment among the lower classes. Okuni of Izumo, a traveling *miko* who served at the Izumo Grand Shrine, created *kabuki* dance forms and early theater (Brandon 66).[10] Okuni drew her inspiration from the number of young samurai that had come to Kyoto to participate in the war effort, but were left without a cause due to the establishment of the Tokugawa shogunate. They came to be known as *kabukimono*, the word *kabuki* referring to something abnormal or askew (Brandon 66). Okuni used these dramatic swaggering motions she saw in daily life in combination with artistic elements from religious and

secular dances and songs to bring *kabuki* to life on stage (Gunji 115; Brandon 66). Her growing popularity attracted other female performers who formed traveling *kabuki* troupes. *Kabuki* during this time could be likened to a musical dance drama performed by three roles (known as *osho*): a teahouse girl, her lover, and a clown named *Saruwaka* who "supplied comic relief" (Gunji 115). Most entertainers were not of very high status and many female performers, in addition to entertaining, were prostitutes (Mehl 159). Due to the clamorous fights that would break out between samurai and merchants looking to seek the company of the women after hours, the Tokugawa government banned women's *kabuki* in 1629 on grounds of immorality and public disorder (Gunji 116). This gave rise to Young Men's (*wakashu*) *kabuki*, which eventually was also banned for the same offense.

During this time, dancing among the masses was mainly done at festivals, such as the Buddhist *bon*-festival,[11] performances for religious ceremonies, and other forms of popular, secular entertainment (Mehl 159). At festivals such as the *bon* festival men and women would dance, but not together in couples. Despite being banned by the Tokugawa shogunate, women still performed theater on a smaller scale (Mehl 159). During this time, *geisha* developed their own styles of dance performed as entertainment accompanied by the *shamisen*[12] and singing. Women in the upper classes of society or of well-to-do farmers would learn dance as a means to move gracefully and practice proper etiquette (Mehl 159). However, outside of these lessons and a few dances done recreationally, the upper-class mainly took on a spectator role in dancing. This mostly has to do with the scandalous nature that accompanied dance. Due to the sexual promiscuity

and disorderly conduct surrounding secular, *zoku* dances and the places they were done, dancing developed a carnival aspect of social confusion and chaos.

### *Interactions and Scandal in the West: Balls and Dancing*

While there was no equivalent to ballroom dance in Japan, ballroom—as well as dancing in general—held similar stigmas in the West. Court and state balls developed from events held by Louis XIV (1638-1715) at the court of Versailles, France (Mehl 158). Balls were regularly held at the Congress of Vienna, and for such occasions new dances were choreographed for guests to enjoy (Mehl 158). Unlike their Japanese counterparts, the European elite regularly participated in dance as entertainment; however, dances were highly regulated, regimented, and thus considered acceptable. The elite viewed dancing done outside of the privileged masses with wariness and mistrust. Margaret Mehl points out in her chapter "Dancing at the Rokumeikan: A New Role for Women?,"

> [a]s for dancing outside the rigid setting of the courtly tradition, it was viewed with suspicion and feared as a threat to social order. Throughout the early modern era the dangerous and sinister side of dancing was emphasized, and it was associated with death and with sin, especially sexual sin and female sinfulness in particular (159).

On one hand, ballroom dancing acted as a healthy form of entertainment that brought people together in an atmosphere of socialization and good spirits. On the other hand, the physical nature of ballroom broke previous boundaries set to uphold the propriety of both men and women. With the West being characterized by Christian morals and ethics, it would be quite worrisome to have young, single women dancing in close embrace with men they hardly knew. The romantic nature of ballroom dancing could have the

tendency for people to get lost in moments of passion, thus leading people down a path of sinfulness, death, and destruction. Dancing among the elite circles had rigid rules of court society to control what dancing could become, but no such authority existed over the lower classes. Social dancing had the effect of expanding one's natural boundaries and created a sense of freedom as liberated from surrounding culture and cultural expectations. Thus, if dancing could not be controlled, the liberation and relief from the constriction of everyday living and societal rules could very well subvert the conservative standard established during this time period. The darker, immoral sides—by which I mean the break from culturally imposed boundaries—of dancing could become prevalent, thus subverting western morals and traditional hierarchies governing society. Whether ballroom dancing could facilitate such disorder is unknown; however, the anxiety ballroom created concerned conservative ways of thinking.

By the nineteenth century, dancing disseminated throughout the classes and became a popular activity among the masses (Mehl 159). Despite its newfound popularity, several new dance crazes, especially the waltz, characterized by a close hold and high tempo beats, caused tension and outrage among intellectuals. Prior to the introduction of the waltz, minuets, English country dances, Cotillion, Quadrilles, in addition to other courtly dances were popular during this time period (Aldrich 15-17).[13] Minuets were characterized by geometric figures and focused on groups of couples that performed as parts of an overall piece (Mehl 167). Partners barely touched one another and the dance was quite slow while being performed before an audience. Therefore, the introduction of waltz and other ballroom styles were very different from that of the courtly dances that preceded them.

***Opening Closed Doors: The Meiji Restoration***

The changes between the Edo Period and the Meiji Reformation transformed Japan into an entirely different nation overnight. While the shogunate worked to unite its people for over two hundred years, it suffered many of the same flaws as the feudal system in Europe. Abuse of power from *daimyo* and samurai, the rising status of the coin and the merchant, and the gradual breakdown of the agricultural economy slowly but surely worked to re-open Japan's closed doors (Sansom 471). By the time Commodore Perry[14] arrived on Japan's shores in 1853, the groundwork had already been laid for Japan to transition into the new era with minimal bloodshed.

During the Meiji Restoration, the Emperor was restored to power and the caste system abolished, which laid the groundwork for a class system allowing for a strong middle-class to emerge. Japan's thirst for knowledge was unquenchable, and political officials began the process of intellectual borrowing from other nations, particularly from western nations (Shively 77). To build the blueprint for modernization, the Japanese government sent the brightest intellectuals and skilled government officials abroad to learn the structure and technology of western nations (Tobin 12).

During the early half of Meiji, the Japanese government became very aware of how far Japan had fallen behind during their 250 years of seclusion. Democratic legislature, capitalism, mass production, print and communication, public transportation, and education were rapidly becoming a part of Japan's infrastructure (Inoue 396). Japan for the first time became a unified, nation-state, and began to mold the Japanese identity. In her article, "Gender, Language, and Modernity: Toward An Effective History of Japanese Women's Language" Miyako Inoue states,

> [t]he development of print capitalism (in the form of mass-circulation newspapers and magazines) and the instituting of compulsory education further created a sense of the population as not only an administrative and political body, but a nation-state where people came to identify themselves as Japanese and to imagine Japan as more than an arbitrary unit (396).

The Japanese government sought to create an identity that would command respect from the established western powers. Given that Japan had never been completely unified in mind, body, and spirit, their community was in the process of being imagined. In Anderson's book *Imagined Communities: Reflections of the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, he defines nations as an "imagined political community" in the sense that the concepts and image of a nation exist in the minds of people within said nation (Anderson 5-7). By no means is he suggesting that the nation is not real, but rather made real through the minds of its people. Thus, they are not a natural phenomenon, but a concept invented and governed through people. Importing western culture, customs, and essentially the western soul, posed modernization against traditions. Japan sought an image for itself in the West, which raised the question how much of the West was necessary for them to gain equal standing in global politics.

Initially, Japan tried to shed its connection with its feudal past, leaving it in the dark ages of Edo. As Donald H. Shively remarks in his chapter "Japanization of the Middle Meiji,"

> [w]hile it was the Westerners who were the barbarians before 1868, the Japanese leaders now became extremely sensitive to the fact that their own society appeared backward and barbaric to the West (81).

These insecurities and fears transferred over to the political sphere. The unequal treaties,[15] a constant reminder that western civilizations did not consider Japan on equal grounds, occupied the minds of Japanese politicians for the first half of the Meiji era. To

pro-western intellectuals, taking on superficial aspects of modernization was not enough. The Japanese had to embody the West, and in a sense become western. One of the ways of importing western culture came in the form of balls and ballroom dancing at the *Rokumeikan*.

### *The Rokumeikan*

Japan's imagination not only projected over the nation, but also played out on the dance floor.  Ballroom and western-style dances came to Japan in two very big ways: from students and members from foreign missions sent abroad to study in the West and the building of the *Rokumeikan* ("Hall of the Cry of the Deer")[16] (Mehl 162). Foreign Minister Inoue Kaoru[17] (1835–1915) believed the *Rokumieikan* would be the key to changing the unequal treaties by bringing the Japanese elite and western diplomats into direct social contact (Seidensticker 98). Built by British architect Josiah Conder (1852-1920), the building functioned as a place where Japanese government officials could entertain in western style (Finn 230). Construction of the *Rokumeikan* began in 1881 at the Hibiya[18] site (across from what would become Hibiya Park) and officially opened on November 28, 1883 (Seidensticker 69; Finn 230).

Various events were held in this building, such as concerts, meetings, retreats, and charity events, the most important and popular being balls and social gatherings (Finn 230). Originally, at the first balls held at the *Rokumeikan*, only foreigners would dance with a small number of Japanese people joining them, mainly the men and women who had been abroad (Mehl 163).  Naturally, this left many men without dance partners

simply because there were not enough women who knew how to dance in western fashion.

### *Dancing into the Light: Emergence of Women in the Public Sphere*

The cultural research done abroad not only affected Japan as a nation, but it greatly changed the dynamics of socialization between men and women. While abroad, Japanese people became very aware of how low women's status was at home.  In her article "The Formation of the Myth of Motherhood in Japan" Akiko Niwa points out,

> [c]hild rearing in the West by women who were considered equal to men and who were equipped with a good scientific knowledge, must have appeared extremely modern in the eyes of those Japanese (75).

During the Edo period, for the most part, women were relegated to the sidelines of society; and these restraints only grew tighter the higher one climbed up the social ladder. The working definition of the female role in Edo society essentially was that

> …women are inferior to men. They are not fit to raise children since they tend to be carried away by their love. Since women are ignorant, they should remain humble, obeying their husbands' orders at all times (Niwa 72).

Of course these edicts applied mainly to the men who could read and put them into action. The ordinary farmer or commoner with little schooling had no idea that these treaties existed, much less could read them (Ueno 129). This did not mean that women of lower castes had more autonomy over themselves than the women of upper classes. They may have had more sexual freedom and mobility than women from a samurai household, but their degree of independence and decisions over their own future was severely limited as well.

In addition to their ranking in overall society, women were divided into two categories: *jionna*, women of the soil/wives, and *yūjo*, women of pleasure (Ueno 125). *Jionna* and their husbands were not supposed to derive any pleasure from their relationship. Their union functioned as a social and economic contract, with the purpose of continuing the family lineage. Men visited *yūjo* when they desired to have fun or leave their daily experience and enter a realm of fantasy (Ueno 126). So when women accompanied their husbands to the soirées and gatherings hosted at the *Rokumeikan* they were hot topics in newspapers and magazines (Finn 231, Seidensticker 99).

The Meiji Era's attempts to westernize and, specifically the *Rokumeikan*, gave upper-class women a chance to break from their Edo confinements and assert themselves in society as never before. Alongside the mention of elite women frequenting the *Rokumeikan*, newspapers emphasized the importance and social gravity of dancing. Western dancing became the new skill that the Japanese elite, mainly women, needed to know. Although a new style of dance, it was not an uncommon practice for well-to-do families to send their daughters to learn dance. Just as in the West, Japanese elite thought dance cultivated social graces that so defined the upper-class.

Due to the lack of female dance partners at the *Rokumeikan* balls, Itō Hirobumi and Inoue Kaoru asked Johannes Ludwig Janson (1849-1914), a professor of veterinary medicine at the Agricultural College, to teach western-style dancing at the *Rokumeikan* in the summer of 1884 (Mehl 163). Prior to these lessons, for a short time, the Tokyo Ball Association (*Tokyō Butōkai*) planned a number of social gatherings and parties for upper-class couples to practice and learn social etiquette (Finn 231). However, these were short-lived and were replaced by the dance lessons offered by Janson. The *Tokyō Butōkai* held

ballroom lessons every Monday evening and was attended mainly by noble women. Eventually the classes were opened up to geisha, female students from *Gakushushin*, and the women's teacher training college (*Joshi Shihan Gakkō*), most likely because of the shortage of female partners at balls (Mehl 163). Women, before the Meiji Era, were never this visible in public. Not only did Japan wish to westernize externally, but the internal changes westernization brought gave women power to make something of themselves besides wives and mothers, which was only amplified in the 1920s and 30s.

### *Immorality and Danger: Shifting the Boundaries Between Men and Women*

Despite its popularity and integration into upper-class etiquette, ballroom and western-style dance did not escape critique. These dances transformed the way people physically interacted with the opposite sex. Dances such as the waltz, with a romantic air and emphasis on partnered couples, created uneasiness among social intellectuals. The problem of how men and women should interact pertained not only to ballroom dancing, but also touched on the overarching question of how society should deal with the new phenomena of women's increasing public presence.[19]

With women's role in society growing, gender dynamics took new shapes and forms. These new interactions, while seen as positive and encouraged, needed a new set of rules to govern young women and men's behavior and facilitate these encounters (Mehl 167). Ballroom, as one of these new forms of interaction, received mixed reviews. While not seen as completely harmful, ballroom dancing caused men and women to interact on a physical level previously unknown to them. As Mehl elaborates,

> [a]ll these discussants realized that society was changing and traditional morality was changing with it, but they warned that in the context of traditional morality the close physical contact of dancing could be harmful at the present time… (168)

Men may have danced with women in the Edo period, but they certainly were not their wives or any woman of respectable standing. These activities were reserved for the *yūjo*. While these divisions still existed in the Meiji Era, the lines defining the two spheres were being redefined due to the *jionna*'s new presence in previous male spaces. Women of respectable standing could now engage in play just as men could, within reason. Other activities such as tea, music, and moon-viewing parties were encouraged in lieu of ballroom dancing for the sake of not progressing too quickly and compromising the integrity/chastity of women.

### The Purge of Westernization: The Declining Years of the Rokumeikan

While doing their research abroad, Japanese intellectuals and officials, especially Minister Kaoru, realized the importance of balls to the political and social realm of European society (Mehl 162). An invitation to a ball reflected your status among elite society, and

> …was the perfect setting in which ladies and gentlemen, attired in the latest fashions, could exercise their considerable dancing abilities and, more importantly, demonstrate their mastery of polite behavior, which was required for acceptance into genteel society (Aldrich xvii).

The balls held at the *Rokumeikan* then reflected more than just casually stepping around the floor. If they were to hold a successful event, they had to follow the strict social protocols established by and for the western upper-class. In this vein, balls, and more specifically ballroom dancing, represented an *ideoscape* which is define as,

… concatenations of images, but they are often directly political and frequently have to do with ideologies of states and the counterideologies of movements explicitly oriented to capturing state power or a piece of it (Appadurai 53).

If the Japanese elite could reproduce social culture as imagined by westerners and meet the standards of genteel society as described above, they could convince the western powers to elevate Japan's political status, thus abolishing the unequal treaties. In this way, the *Rokumeikan* floors became a stage for the Japanese men and women to prove they were "as civilized and enlightened as anyone else" (Seidensticker 69). Balls were used as an ideoscape as a means to regain political and social power among the intrusion and strong guidance of western nations. And ballroom dancing became the form of resistance and evidence that the western world and the Japanese reality were not entirely distant from one another. The feminized Japan and the dominating western powers played a game of leading and following, one trying to contain the other.

Criticism of ballroom dancing came from conservatives who expressed concern over the heavy amounts of westernization in Japan, in addition to the many other efforts of the Meiji government to modernize the nation (Mehl 166). As the Meiji Era progressed, an anti-westernization sentiment began to arise among the citizens and intellectuals pertaining to how the government was presenting itself to the West. On the issue, Shively highlights that

> [i]t is not possible to confine our discussion entirely to the intellectual and cultural world, because even there the reaction was to a large degree in the form of protest against the Westernization policies and thus became entwined with criticism of domestic and foreign affairs…The philosophers, educators, and critics-at-large clamored for a reversal of the oligarchs' "Europeanization" policy of the eighties, which ranged from Germanization of political institutions to sponsoring ballroom dancing (79).

The enthusiasm once held for western culture began to decline toward the end of the 1880s, and people truly saw where westerners stood in their opinion of Japanese civility. As Edward Said would express, Japan was not only fighting for the international rights to its own country, but also struggling in the overall battle against the processes of Orientalism.[20] To combat these processes, Japan tried to exchange western social capital for the possibility of equal treatment and a place among western nations in global politics. But did they choose the right tools, and were they effective?

Despite the popular talk surrounding the *Rokumeikan* events, toward the end of the 1880s, fame turned to infamy as the building and its patrons began to incur a negative image. Many newspaper reports were published on the rumored indiscretions of upper-class ranging from infidelity to numerous affairs between prominent Japanese men and women of the time (Mehl 168-9). Alleged immorality and scandals became the face of ballroom and the *Rokumeikan*. In addition to the supposed indiscretions at the *Rokumeikan* balls, the revision of the unequal treaties failed, causing turmoil and heavy criticism of the upper-class's interactions with the West (Finn 232). The merriment and nature of balls must have appeared ludicrous to onlookers concerned about the future of Japan. Shively remarks,

> [i]t is not surprising that at this spectacle of the great men of the country dressed like actors and dancing with their arms around foreign women, there were Japanese who took fright thinking that the fate of their country had fallen into the hands of madmen (96).

Lack of progress on treaty revisions showed people that western powers still considered their Japanese counterparts inferior, and that the attempt to adopt the western soul was depriving Japan of something immensely valuable—their heritage and culture.

The *Normanton* incident only fanned the flames to the already burning *Rokumeikan*. In 1886 a British freighter sank off the coast of Japan. Out of all the passengers, none of the Japanese people survived, but all of the British passengers did. The captain went to trial, but the consular court in Kobe acquitted him of any charges (Seidensticker 100). It caused such an uproar that eventually he served a short jail sentence, but this still did not satisfy the masses. While Japan had transformed its nation, they were still nowhere in terms of equal rights on an international scale.

The failure of the treaty revisions and the uncouth behavior of the upper-class, caused a backlash against westernization and everything associated with it, including ballroom dance. Japan searched for an unique image for itself that the Japanese formed, not something borrowed from the West and re-wrapped in a Japanese package. Sugiura Jugo, a member of *Seikyosha*—a group seeking to "preserv[e]…the national essence"— voiced in his publication "Nihon kyoiku genron" that, "[e]veryone knows that each of the countries of the world which maintains its honor has its own special style" (qtd. in Shively 105). Japanese intellectuals were tired of copying and wanted to revive what it meant to be Japanese before they lost it forever.

In 1889, the *Rokumeikan* was sold to the Peers Club and was eventually passed down to an insurance company, before it was demolished on the eve of Pearl Harbor to make way for temporary government buildings (Seidensticker 70). The *Rokumeikan* and ballroom dancing's time had passed as Japan sought to regain its identity and revive its indigenous cultural arts. Western dancing and balls moved to the periphery of society, until the twentieth century, when ballroom dancing reemerged as entertainment for the urban middle-class (Mehl 170).

## CHAPTER *1* ENDNOTES

[1] In the Edo period the emperor did not have direct control over the nation, but rather was a figure-head used by the *shogunate* in power. A caste system existed during this time with samurai at the top, farmers, artisans, and finally merchants. The government thought of merchants as parasites who benefitted from the work of others (Sansom 467-8).

[2] During the Edo period, the Tokugawa shogunate closed the entirety of Japan to the outside world and conducted minimal trade with certain nations during this time. However, foreigners and foreign trade were highly regulated. This marks in history the closing of Japan's doors to the rest of the world.

[3] *Nihon Buyō* refers to Japanese traditional dance, particularly kabuki dance. *Nihon* is the Japanese word for Japan. And *buyō* is the Japanese word for dance. The *bu* in *buyō* can also be pronounced *mai*, which refers to courtly dances, upper-class theater dances, ritualistic and religious dances, and the dances of *Noh* drama. The term was used all the way until the middle ages (ca 1600) (Waterhouse, "dance, traditional"; Gunji pp. 74-5). The *yō*, which can also be pronuced *odori*, refers to the dances of the Edo period, particularly the popular and kabuki dance forms developed in 17th – 19th centuries. *Odori* also indicates a stylistic difference. While *mai* indicates upper-class and refined dances, *odori* indicates dances derived from rustic festival dances and other dances of the common people that were considered "rougher and inartistic" (Gunji 74-75).

[4] There are other types of *kagura* and they are as follows: *mi-kagura*, referring to *kagura* performed at the imperial court, and *sato-kagura*, referring to *kagura* performed at village festivals (Gunji 81).

[5] Some of Susa-no-o's mischief involved purposefully ruining the rice fields Amaterasu planted, throwing excrement in the New Palace as she was about to celebrate the feast of first fruits, and causing her to injure herself when he threw a flayed piebald colt of Heaven into the place where she was weaving (de Bary, et al. 24).

[6] The Shinto religious and ceremonial dances are generally referred to as *kagura* (Gunji 81).

[7] *Miko* specifically refers to the priest and priestess that perform *kagura*. To this day people who perform *kagura* are still called *miko* (Gunji 81).

[8] When I speak of the medieval period I am referring to the latter half of the Heian period (794-1185), the Kamakura period (1185-1333), and the first part of the Muromachi period (1338-1573).

[9] *Ennen* was popular at large temples and shrines during the end of the Heian period and into the Kamakura period. It was a form of dance drama and was a compilation of song, dance, and dialogue. It was performed by monks and priests at banquets held at the temples and shrines. *Dengaku* derived from folk dances done in the fields and countryside, such as the rice-planting ritual, which were refined and brought to the cities as entertainment. *Dengaku* had elements of *bugaku* and *sangaku* (the imported dances from China, India, and Korea) and is danced with many people who play instruments as they dance. *Kowaka mai* is performed with a fan as the dancer chants stories of ancient battles. A drum is played during the performance and the dancer's costume consists of a tall-black lacquered hat and the same formal dress feudal-warriors would wear on special occasions. *Kyogen komai* was developed from the popular songs and dances of the day known as *furyu*. It was performed as a comic interlude in *Noh* drama. *Furyu odori* was a popular style of dance during the Muromachi period characterized by vigorous leaps and jumps (Gunji 113). "*Furyu odori* was an expression of the new liberal ideas prevelant as a result of the increased economic power of the common people" (Gunji 113). *Furyu* gatherings became immensely popular during occasions such as New Year's and the *bon* festival (Gunji 113).

[10] This shrine is located in Shimane prefecture.

[11] The *bon* festival is a summer Buddhist festival that celebrates ones' ancestors and honors the spirits of the dead.  It has been celebrated in Japan for the past five centuries ("Bon Odori" 21).

[12] A traditional Japanese three-stringed lute (string instrument) with a square-body played with a large plectrum (similar to a pick).

[13] The English country dances are performed with two lines, men facing women. Dancers proceed down the line starting with the top couple.  Cotillion, known as contredanse in France, were performed in a square formation by eight dancers (Aldrich 15). "The quadrille was a series of figures, usually five, performed without changes as in a cotillion but maintaining the square formation of eight performers" (Aldrich 16).

[14] Commodore Matthew Perry arrived in the Edo Bay in 1853. He demanded that Japan re-open its borders to trade with the U.S. and other foreign countries (Hall, "history of Japan (Edo History)").

[15] Signed at the end of the Tokugawa shogunate's reign, the treaty gave the foreign powers the right of extraterritorial and control of tariffs. It took about 40 years for these treaties to be abolished in 1899 (Shively 89). The treaty talks began in 1882 and were called off in the summer of 1887 with little to no progress made (Finn 232).

[16] The name of the building was derived from the ancient Chinese poem *Shih Ching* that "signifies a hospitable summons to illustrious guests" and a friendly, warm relationship with a stranger (Seidensticker 69).

[17] Foreign Minister Inoue handled the negotiations of the Unequal Treaties throughout the 1880s.  Him and his family spent some time abroad on the Iwakura mission, sent to study European cities and how they operated.  From 1871-73 he visited various European cities and returned to Japan in 1878. Due to the negative publicity of the failed negotiations Inoue resigned from his post in 1887 (Mehl 162).

[18] This location is just south of the present-day Imperial Hotel (Finn 230).

[19] By public, I do not mean the distinction between inside versus outside of the home, but mainly the boundaries of entertainment and pleasure. Women did have jobs during the Edo period, depending on their class, but as far as entertainment and adventure, women were quite limited to stay for the most part near their natal dwelling and local area. The women who partook in entertainment were mainly the ones who were supplying the entertainment, so in this way women being more visible in the public domain refers to women taking jobs previously not available and becoming consumers of entertainment and leisure.

[20] "…Orientalists, like many other early-nineteenth-century thinkers, conceive of humanity either in large collective terms or in abstract generalities" (Said 154). Orientalism works by taking vast stretches of land, cultures, and people and herd them under the title "Orient." Japan, being an eastern nation, tried to fight the colonial imperialism that so many other Asian nations fell to (i.e. China and Korea). Since Japan could not directly confront the West, they tried to join the western ranks via exhibition of western standards of proper behavior and conduct, which still failed miserably. In the end, the Japanese would always be considered the exotic 'Other' in western minds just based on their geographic location and race as being non-European, non-western, or non-white.

## Chapter 2

## Standing in the Shadows of Modernity:
## The Big City Lights of Tokyo in the 1920s & 30s

By the end of the Taisho Period (1912-1926), Japan's cities barely had a trace of their Edo Period roots. The city of Tokyo, as well as other major centers in Japan, were well on their way to completing the outward and inward transformations of modernity started in the Meiji Era. With the abolition of the "unequal treaties" in 1899—something that preoccupied Meiji politics for over 40 years—Japan regained some of its dignity from the dancing days of the *Rokumeikan* (Shively 89). Japan's victory in the Sino-Japanese War (1894-5) and, most importantly, the Russo-Japanese War[1] (1904-5) gave Japan a seat among western powers and, to a certain degree, global politics (Waswo 26). If Japan's defeat of a western power did not solidify their presence among the "white-man's club," then their alliance with Britain and seat at the peace conference held in Versailles (1919) proceeding World War I sealed the invitation (Starrs 62).

By the Taisho Period, the advancements made in Meiji put tradition and modernity in direct conflict with one another. The increase in urbanization due to environmental factors, such as the Great Kanto Earthquake, impacted the sense of community as people moved from natal dwellings to the big city filled with unknowns. As Tokyo grew in importance, so did the sense of urban culture and with the increase in middle-class consumers, new spaces were established to accommodate the need for entertainment and leisure activities.

In the 1920s and 30s, consumption of western crazes and fashion transformed the meaning of Appadurai's *ideoscapes* ever so slightly. As opposed to the government's use

of the western social etiquette and ballroom dancing to make headway in international politics, the common people used western goods and forms of entertainment as *ideoscapes* within the framework of Japanese social structure.  In other words, the middle-class, and new figures such as the *mobo* (modern boy) and *moga* (modern girl) used these western imports to create an identity outside of the proscribed roles of tradition, societal, and government definitions.  In these ways, new forms of entertainment, such as dancehalls and ballroom dancing as commodities, created an alternate space where the participants could redefine themselves outside of traditional Japanese identity.

### The Great Kanto Earthquake (Kantō Daishinsai 関東大震災)

The Great Kanto Earthquake forever changed Tokyo from its Edo roots by completely altering the city landscape. Prior to the earthquake, Tokyo still had most of its waterways with many rivers and man-made canals used for trade and transportation.  If one still wanted to escape the

> …brick, stone, and bright lights, one could easily turn eastwards up one of the narrow streets and walk to the river and beyond, and be scarcely troubled at all by modern contrivances (Seidensticker 73).

Even before the Taisho Era, people began to see Edo disappear little by little as streets were widened and bridges reconstructed; change became the new face of the up and coming Tokyo (Seidensticker 84). The disbandment of the class system imposed by the Tokugawa shogunate and the introduction of capitalist growth, placed money over birth and removed the glass ceiling preventing many of the merchants and wealthy farmers from advancing further in society.  These factors contributed to the slow immigration of

wealthy citizens from the lower class dwellings of Edo to the developing real estate of Tokyo (Seidensticker 85). By the time the earthquake occurred, Tokyo contained one-sixteenth of Japan's population and about two-fifths of the economic capital (Seidensticker 87).

The earthquake originated in the Kanto district on September 1, 1923 (Goedertier 125). Measuring a 7.9 on the Richter scale, the earthquake destroyed much of Tokyo and Yokohama. Many of the buildings in Tokyo were still built out of wood and easily caused conflagrations throughout Tokyo and Yokohama, adding to the destructive power of the earthquake (Waswo 54). Over half of Tokyo and Yokohama were destroyed and six prefectures in Kanto and surrounding areas were declared disaster zones (Waswo 54). The death toll reached over 100,000 and cost the government over billions in reconstruction and repairs (Goedertier 126).

While the earthquake took a financial toll of Japan's economic system, this did change the look and feel of Tokyo. Many of Tokyo's man-made canals were filled and the city of water quickly became a concrete jungle. Long and complex train lines expanded the reach of the city limits, and more people began flowing into the city allowing a vibrant urban culture to blossom. At the center stage of the new city were the *moga* and the *mobo*.

### *Moga & Mobo: Traversing Tradition in a New Age*

One result of the rapidly modernizing/westernizing Tokyo was the *mobo* (modern boy) and, more importantly, the *moga* (modern girl), who made their appearance around the mid-to late-20s. While the *mobo* did have a somewhat important role in this shocking

transformation of the youth, boys and especially men had been wearing western clothing and adopting western traditions since the Meiji Era. Culturally, it was not strange for men to transition with the times and demands of their labor. Women, on the other hand, were

> …no longer secluded to the confines of the household, but [were] out in the open, working and playing alongside men. This was her [the *moga*] real transgression: she would not accept the division of labor that had placed her in the home (Silverberg 246).

These new women, with cropped hair, western dress (particularly a short dress or skirt), jewelry, and a newfound independence, threatened the societal precedent. As stated in the previous chapter, women and men's worlds were divided, with one of the main lines being economic opportunities and pleasure. The *moga* indulged her own desires without regards to tradition, marriage, family, or men. These women exacted their own agency and exerted their own will in ways unknown to Japanese women prior to this time.

The *moga*'s power came from her status as a consumer. The economy and commodification of western entertainment and goods became a tool that she could use to build an identity for herself outside of a Japanese framework. Once women left the household and gained some sense of autonomy over their lives they did not want to go back to their homes to play the role of "good wife, wise mother."[2] Through consumption of foreign goods,

> [w]omen, as an unprivileged gender in Japan, have not only gained the ability to 'challenge hierarchies of the native over the foreign' (Kelsky 1999: 238), but have developed a kind of natural 'flexibility' that frees them from the oppressive laws of nation and race (Goldstein-Gidoni and Daliot-Buul 66).

The West was no longer an ideology to live up to, but rather an alternative culture that women could vicariously live through by purchasing products and foreign forms of entertainment, such as movies and dancing. These women were probably not longing to

be western, but were using pieces of western identity, or what they perceived to be western identity, to mix and match other possibilities of existence.

Naturally, the transgression of women from their designated roles in society caused a slight panic and intellectual backlash.

> The Japan of the 1920s was at the center of cultural turmoil. It was a time of the lost generation [*mobo* and *moga*]. It is the lost generation, because [Japan] was fast turning into an industrial and militaristic power, and the rising middle class was not sure of what was in the future (Karatsu 423).

The rise of this generation signaled to intellectuals that the dark side of modernity had begun to take its course. Intellectuals viewed the bourgeois class and the consuming *moga* as selfish, unproductive, and began using the term "erotic, grotesque nonsense" (*ero guro nonsense*) to describe this group and their activities (Sato 37).  The perils of modernity that Japan thought it could avoid (i.e. exploitation of workers, social disorder, breakdown of traditional family structure and community bonds) were confronting them right in the flesh of the *moga* and middle-class consumerism (Starrs 106).  As Roy Starrs says in his chapter "High Modernism and Fascist Backlash":

> By the early 20th century the full price of the Meiji government's 'modernization policies' had begun to be fully apparent—both on the larger social and environmental scale an on the more intimate scale of individual psychology (106).

Modernity began to reveal its darker side, and Japanese intellectuals feared the power which individuals had to discover their own identity, as opposed to following their advice on what should be done.  What Japanese society would come to if it continued along the path of self-interest and empty spending/time was a thought difficult to bear for conservative Japanese intellectuals during this time.

***Exoticism at Work: The West & 'Others' as Entertainment***

With *moga* and *mobo*'s youth culture and new consumers from a growing middle-class, new activities were created, one of them being ballroom dancing. Ballroom still carried the same notions of westernization as it did during the Meiji Era, as well as the same ambiguous status of being both healthy and detrimental to society. Although originally a politically driven form of "entertainment" by the aristocracy and elite of Japan, social dancing also became a form of entertainment for the emerging middle-class and city dwellers. Many of these people did not have extensive contact with foreigners that the upper-class had experienced during the Meiji Era, so how did these people engage in ballroom dancing?

In a section of her book, *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion*, Marta Savigliano discusses the impact of the tango, and to a lesser extent other ballroom dances, in Japan and what tango looked like when it arrived in the 1930s. In Japan four types of tango emerged: the French-style used mainly by the upper-class, the British-style learned by the middle-class, the tango argentino "rebels," and the *Tango Aregentino* (Broadway-style) followers. [3] Each of these styles emphasized different aspects of the tango, which could explain their

| Ballroom Dances in Meiji (1868-1912) | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Religious | Secular |
| **Ga (雅)** *(Elegant, refined)* | | Waltz Quadrilles Cotillion English Country Dances |
| **Zoku (俗)** *(Common, rustic, crude)* | | |

Table 3a shows which ballroom dances were appropriate/performed by different classes in Japan.

popularity among certain classes of people.

Megata Tsunumi, a Japanese aristocrat who spent many years in Europe, brought the French-style of tango to Japan around 1926 (Savigliano 180-1). He began a dance academy providing free dance lessons to upper-class Japanese citizens. In his classes he would teach the waltz, foxtrot, and end on a tango. Megata's students claimed that Japan was ready to receive the

| Ballroom Dances in Taisho & early-Showa (1912-1945) | | |
|---|---|---|
| | *Religious* | *Secular* |
| *Ga (雅)* <br> (Elegant, refined) | | Waltz <br> French-style Tango <br> Foxtrot |
| *Zoku (俗)* <br> (Common, rustic, crude) | | British-style Tango <br> Waltz <br> Foxtrot <br> Argentine Tango* |

Table 3b shows the transition of dances, which dances were new, and performed by the different classes. The asterisk indicates that this style of dance was done by a minority not the majority.

somewhat scandalous tango. However, as Savigliano points out, the audience ready to receive this dance was the upper strata of society. Savigliano elaborates that

> [t]he Japanese aristocracy was working hard to acquire the Western social skills that would allow them to mingle comfortably with foreign diplomats both at home and abroad. They wished to participate without embarrassment in the parties and social dances of international high society (180).

The upper-class still had engagement with the West and western style functions; therefore, the skill of ballroom dancing was still a necessity among the elite. Despite Megata's introduction of the elegant French-style of tango, the tango's life was quite different and less passionate among the middle-class.

In the 1930s, British dance instructors were traveling to Japan to teach large foreign settlements in Kobe. Japanese people with connections to foreign communities had access to the social dance (*shakō dansu)* classes and eventually other people acquired to manuals and booklets (Savigliano 181). The British-style of tango stripped the original

Argentine tango of what Europeans considered to be overly passionate. This particular style of tango was very stiff, rigid, and had strict guidelines for how partners were to face one another and dance together (Savigliano 181). This codified version of tango allowed the dance to lose some of its sensual and passionate qualities and gain a foothold among the slightly more conservative Japanese middle-class. Savigliano quotes a dance instructor saying, "[i]t [British school of tango] is a style suited to dance partners who do not know each other, or behave that way…" (181). The British-style of tango made the interaction between couples very impersonal. Given that the waltz and foxtrot were dances originating in western nations, they mainly had a romantic, stylish air to them, but nothing that directly made these dances erotic or sensual. With the boundaries and regulations of ballroom dances sanitized as much as possible, the packaging and selling of social/ballroom dancing as entertainment and leisure could ensue.

### *Play is Hard Work: The 'Taxi' Dance Hall (Dansu hōru)*

The taxi dancehall began to make its debut around the world during the 1920s. Invented in the United States during the prohibition of alcohol, the taxi dancehalls served as a place where men could socialize with women without the use or sale of alcohol (Mackie 69). Men would purchase tickets to dance with women who worked at the dancehall as hired dance partners. The taxi dancehalls began in port cities along the West Coast, but spread to major city centers like Chicago and New York, eventually reaching Europe, then Shanghai and Japan (Mackie 68-9).

When the taxi dance craze came to Japan, buildings were constructed to fit the specific needs of the dancehall required; however, dances were sometimes held at hotel

ballrooms. In her article "Sweat, Perfume, and Tobacco: The Ambivalent Labor of the Dancehall Girl" Vera Mackie remarks that

> [s]everal books appeared on the architecture of dancehalls, which had to be suited to the purposes of social dancing, while complying with regulations designed to discourage unseemly mixing between men and women off the dance floor (ctd. in Mackie 69).

After the Great Kanto Earthquake, dancehalls flourished in cities such as Tokyo and Osaka, and treaty ports such as Yokohama and Kobe, partially due to the abundance of space available after the fires and earthquake destroyed half of the city and surrounding areas. These places acted as an alternative space for new city dwellers to seek entertainment outside of home and the work place. Taxi dancehalls in Japan worked the same as they did in the United States; however, they became a place for the *moga* and *mobo* to display new international fashion and experience new types of socialization (Mackie 69).

Whether the taxi dancehall acted as a third space is very difficult to say. A third space, as defined by Ray Oldenburg in his chapter "The Problem of Place in America," is

> …a generic designation for a great variety of public places that host a regular, voluntary, informal, and happily anticipated gatherings of individuals beyond the realms of home and work (16).

In this vein, dancehalls, as well as new forms of entertainment like coffeehouses, potentially qualifies as third spaces; however, they did not necessarily meet all of the criteria a third space demands. Going to dancehalls were far from informal gatherings and people did not necessarily go there to bond, meet new people, or discuss the day's events. While these ties to dancehalls were most likely weak connections, promulgated on intimacy and the touch of sensuality added by the taxi dancer, these places could be used

to foster new connections, which are best seen in the novel *Naomi* (serialized 1924~) by Tanizaki Junuchiro (1886-1965).[4]

*Naomi* depicts the growth and nuances in Tokyo city life, particularly in new spaces such as the café or dancehalls. While this novel falls more along the lines of exaggeration or magnifying the fears of what a rapidly changing Japan meant for Japanese tradition, it displays the *moga* in her natural habit, the city. The story is told from the perspective of Jōji, the main character and protagonist. Over the course of the book Jōji describes his relationship with Naomi, a girl working as a waitress in a café, whom he takes under his wing to make her a proper lady and perfect wife. The novel takes a comic twist, as Naomi eventually becomes an out-of-control, uncouth woman of western/modern tastes that Jōji must contend with. In a particular scene, Naomi and Jōji attend a local dancehall with a few of Naomi's male companions. Naomi observes the interactions between a Japanese woman and a foreign man dancing, and she remarks to Jōji:

> "That reminds me. The Pink One was dancing with that Westerner just now."
> "Yes, wasn't it funny?" Naomi gulped down her drink, moistening her dry mouth. "They're not friends or anything; he just walked over and asked the Monkey [The Pink One] to dance with him. He's making a fool of her, don't you see? Doing something like that without being introduced first! He must have taken her for a whore or something."
> "Couldn't she just have refused?"
> "But that's what's so funny—she couldn't refuse because he's a Westerner! What an idiot! She's a disgrace!"
> "But you shouldn't be so harsh. It makes me uncomfortable to hear you talk like that."
> "It's all right, I know what I'm doing. A woman like that ought to be told. Otherwise, she'll make trouble for all of us. Ma-chan said so too—she's going too far, and he's going to warn her."
> "Well, I suppose it's all right for a man to tell her, but…" (Tanizaki 91).

Ironically, later in the night, the same Westerner asks Naomi to dance, which she shyly obliges. After her dance with the Westerner, she returns to the table claiming that the reason he asked *her* to dance was due to westerners being foreign and having no friends. Naomi represents the *moga* through her direct way of speaking and her intense desire for western goods and forms of entertainment such as dance. The novel mentions interactions at dancehalls in several more places, and as the plot progresses, Naomi begins frequenting more dancehalls with a greater foreign presence. She uses the space of the dancehall to meet new people, particularly men, and engages in numerous affairs with them. By the end of the novel, Naomi and Jōji are living in a community with many foreign residents and attending events that are mainly attended by westerners. Naomi uses the space of the dancehall, as well as Jōji's money, to foster new connections to westerners. With these connections she is able to propel herself from the confines of her lowly working class origins and craft the perfect identity, completely liberated from Japanese gender ideals.

While certainly every girl did not follow the extremes of Naomi's example, women and especially *moga* sought to build an identity for themselves outside of constrictions of marriage and what society wanted women to be. The dancehall and social/ballroom dancing acted as an environment of play where the middle-class could indulge in the West as a commodity of entertainment, but one that transforms and bends traditional rules. As Mackie says, "[t]he dancehall is an ambiguous and ambivalent space…" (74). Single men go to dancehalls to "…danc[e] to the sound of cheerful jazz music with a young woman in [their] embrace…just for the price of a bottle of beer, one can openly hold hands with a woman and dance madly with her for a few minutes…"

(qtd. in Mackie 72). While taxi dance girls already embodied this questionable and somewhat erotically charged space, everyone's imaginations could run wild in the context of the dancehall. The importance of this scene shows the many social dynamics and stakes on and off the dance floor. Outside of being a new kind of amusement from the West, the dancehall provided a frame for which ballroom and social dancing could facilitate fun, the formation and re-evaluation of the self, and where reputations could be bolstered or tarnished.

The days of the taxi dancehall was numbered as the 1920s came to a close, and the 1930s brought with it the Japanese government's crack down on practices they considered to be wasteful for society as a whole or promoting moral degeneracy (Tipton 132). The dancehalls became closely associated with *mizushoubai,* [5] which destroyed the classy, refined image of ballroom dancing and turned it into a shady practice (Karatsu 424). In 1925 Osaka officials banned dancing in places where food and drinks were served, and further restrictions continued to follow until dancehalls were finally prohibited in December of 1927 (Tipton 132). During the repression of dancehalls in Osaka, Tokyo dancehalls temporarily flourished, but soon received similar treatment (Mackie 74). By 1940 dancehalls were completely disbanded, due to the government heavily cracking down on activities that did not directly contribute to the war effort (Mackie 79).

While the beginning of World War II did put a hold on ballroom dancing and overall activities considered detrimental to Japanese society, it was never completely stamped out as a form of entertainment due to Japan's interaction with western powers. The dancehall acted as a third space to foster western ideas and culture and display them,

creating social bonds to a certain degree. Just as in the Meiji period, ballroom dancing in itself did not cause social revolution, but rather the ideas and nuances it brought with them from the West.

# CHAPTER 2 ENDNOTES

[1] The Russo-Japanese War was fought between Japan and Russia due to the growing Russian presence in former Japanese territories, such as Liaodong (China). Russia also took occupied Manchuria and Korea began to solicit Russia's help to protect them from the ever-encroaching Japan. While the war cost Japan a great deal in terms of soldiers and money, they won and became the first non-western nation to defeat a western world power (Jansen, "history of Japan (The Russo-Japanese War and Rise to Great Power Status).

[2] Created during the Meiji period, the slogan "Good Wife, Wise Mother" (*Ryōsai kenbo*) referred to "a woman who serves the state by attending to her husband well and raising her child wisely" (Niwa 75). It is a fusion of Confucian ideology of women's work in the domestic sphere, but a modern idea of women's voluntary contribution to the state through their involvement in the home.

[3] The French-style of tango emphasizes elegance, grace, and beauty. It is danced with a little more passion than the British-style, which is characterized by very regimented and regulated movements used as a means to emotionally detach partners from each other. The tango argentino (legs intertwined) was the original version of the tango complete with all of the steps seen as too vulgar and untamed to the British and French dance masters. The Broadway style was developed by Claudio Segovia and Héctor Orezzoli in 1983 featuring professional Argentinean dancers.

[4] Tanizaki Junichirō was a famous author in Japan, one of his famous novels being *Naomi*. The novel began serialization in 1924 and since 1947 various scholars have put the serializations together into book format.

[5] *Mizushoubai* ("water trade") is associated with the flirtation of a sexual encounter that is never fulfilled. These practices are closely associated with the sex industry in Japan and hostesses working in nightclubs or bars (Karatsu 423). During the Taisho and early-Showa period, these practices also extended to café waitress and other establishments with female servers.

# Chapter 3

# Engaging the Self and the Other:
# Cultural Play and Alternate Realities of Ballroom

In the previous chapters, I have presented a short history of ballroom dancing in the West, with a more in-depth look at how ballroom entered Japan and the factors leading to its success or decline. However, while these topics focus on the larger picture and elements that surrounded the reception of ballroom to a foreign audience, how did the act of dancing function on a micro level? When a man and a woman attended a dancehall or moved together on the dance floor, in what were they engaging? Ballroom dancing represents more than just coordinated steps between two people, but can reflect dynamics and tension within and between cultures, such as gender, class, race, and nationality. As Joanna Bosse observed in a conversation she had with a dancer learning the Latin style of ballroom dancing, she remarks that

> [a]lthough few dancers stated the issue [latin versus smooth dances] in such bald terms, Ethan's remark, highlighting as it did the power of dance to transform one's sense of one's own racial identity, was not uncommon (19). [1]

While all Japanese dancers probably did not use dance as a way to transform themselves into another race/ethnicity, Bosse's observation reveals that the type of ballroom dances in which one participates can have an affect on their identity. In this chapter, I will use the movie *Shall We Dansu?* (1996) as a lens to analyze how ballroom dance facilitated cultural play between the foreign activity of western dancing and its Japanese participants in the Meiji, Taisho, and early-Showa eras. In addition to ballroom dancing initiating cultural play, it also becomes a space where its Japanese participants could assert their individuality and negotiate between their cultural identity and the 'Other' created in

ballroom. In these ways, ballroom dancing simultaneously becomes both distant/foreign and near to Japanese culture and identity.

### *Aesthetics of Japanese Dance*

Before the introduction of ballroom, traditional Japanese dance influenced and moved the Japanese people; these were the dances people watched or participated in as entertainment or for social training. Traditional Japanese dance is broken into four categories (*kabuki odori*, *goshugimono*, *kamigata mai*, *sosaku buyo*);[2] however, the dances under these categories have fully borrowed from and influenced one another over the course of their long histories (Hahn 24). Traditional Japanese dance has the interesting characteristic of not distinguishing itself neatly from other performing arts, such as music and theater. In this way, theater, music, and dance uses elements from one another to create an overarching point or add to a larger dynamic (Hahn 26-7).

While not religiously based, *nihon buyō* contains elements of spirituality and Buddhist influence (Hahn 44). Gunji states in his chapter "The Aesthetics of Japanese Dance," "[w]ithout the body there is no dance beauty, but also there is no dance beauty unless one transcends the body" (67). Interestingly enough, despite this notion of transcending the body, Japanese dances are rooted more to the earth, as opposed to airy, lifted movements (Gunji 68). As Gunji describes the difference between eastern and western dancing, he states that

> [w]estern dance attempts to express a world separate and different from the everyday world of human existence, while Japanese dance makes the world we live in a paradise closely related to everyday life and expresses the two as a sort of double exposure (68).

The rooted stances and positions, as well as the attention to detail of how one moves to convey the concept of time and space, exemplify what Gunji conveys in his statement.

Dance steps and choreography do not alone make a dance powerful. To give the dance life and energy *iki* (spirit), *ma* (time and space), *utsuri* (transition), and a sense of playfulness[3] are necessary to create a powerful dance (Gunji 71-3; 78). When brought together, these aesthetics of Japanese dance and art tell a story without words, give it power, and project it to the audience viewing the performance. Tomie Hahn, the author of *Sensational Knowledge: Embodying Culture through Japanese Dance*, responds to a quote by the headmaster of the dance instruction by saying that

> [h]ere dance and daily action inform each other and interconnect. The lines distinguishing them can blur and become liminal; as the movements of dance are informed by daily life, movements in life draw us to recall dance (47).[4]

In this way, the pupil of Japanese dance does not only learn from their master, but also from their daily existence. The art of traditional *buyō* requires both expertise and training; however, it is very much rooted in the human experience and the representation and re-creation of these experiences.

### *Aesthetics of Ballroom Dancing*

Compared to traditional Japanese dance, ballroom's lines are defined much more clearly and do not blend and meld to the extent of Japanese dance. In ballroom dancing, a couple performs the ideal image of a dominant male leader and a passive female follower as they share a dance together. From an outside perspective, it appears that ballroom dancing presents traditional gender roles as the standard for men and women to uphold; however, the subtleties of technique in ballroom place a new demand on men and women

to form an equally dependent partnership. In this way, both men and women must hold their own on the dance floor. Caroline Joan Picart elaborates that "[n]evertheless, one distinct trait of ballroom dancing is dependence on blending two bodies into one, particularly in the closed position" (35). While men lead[5] they are expected to be powerful and strong, yet graceful. The woman is not

> …an unthinking puppet: her responsiveness—which requires that she combine decisiveness…with non-anticipation…is crucial to generating the dynamic that constitutes their identity as a dance couple (Picart 35).

These qualities are unique to ballroom dance in that they rely on a couple to perform these actions, while in *buyō* dancing, a group or an individual would embody and project this in their performance. As opposed to this dynamic being shared between an audience and a performer to create an overall tone, these concepts shift inward and are engaged between the couple only.

These dynamics hold true both for competitive and non-competitive ballroom dancers. The energy between one's self and one's partner is key to making the dance function as one. In this way, ballroom takes the relationship that performers of Japanese dance hold with their audience, and places it between two people instead. Ballroom dancers feed from each other's energy and unique styles to create different moods and stories. In both styles of dance, each movement may be codified and choreographed so that multiple people can learn it, but what the participants bring from their backgrounds and lives helps their dancing blossom into its own unique variety.

### *Japanizing Ballroom: Absorption of the 'Other'*

While traditional Japanese dance and ballroom do not draw their movements from the same source, the ethos behind Japanese dance works within the framework of

ballroom dancing. This quality shared between both kinds of dance allowed the general public access to them from an active, participatory standpoint, as opposed to a passive, viewer standpoint. In the article "Cultural Absorption of Ballroom Dancing in Japan," Rie Karatsu looks at the importation of ballroom not as a "cultural imperialism," but tries show dancing as a reflection and expression of the self and body as transcending nationality.  However, she does not divorce culture and how it effects dancing completely.  Instead she says "[d]ancing bodies may reflect and resist cultural values simultaneously", and continues her point saying "…ballroom dancing is the very attempt to respond to intercultural existence through the body, the prime location of any real existence" (Karatsu 418).  Ballroom dancers and the dances they perform reflect gender, assertion of self identity through physical representation, and how they perform can reflect whether they chose to oblige by the conventional norms established by their respective societies. For example, while dancing the waltz in Europe during the 18<sup>th</sup> century may have represented defiance of societal protocol on how to express sexuality and love (or not) in a particular setting, when placed in Japan, the waltz represented the way Europeans showed their love or feel romance. As Karatsu states

> [i]n Japan, ballroom dancing has been an exotic import from the West, an erotic symbol of Western heterosexual courtship and an unprecedented freedom of sexual expression in public (425).

In a Japanese context, the waltz then embodies what it means to be a European lady and gentleman, and how they are allowed to express themselves. This image can be examined and compared to Japanese imagery of courtship, allowing for a dialogue to ensue between both cultural ideas of propriety, love, and male/female interaction.

While Meiji participants saw ballroom as a means to an end, Taisho and early-Showa participants viewed it as a way to create ties and gain a sense of freedom. In his chapter "It Looks Like a Third Place" Bryant Simon observes that "[w]eak ties, even manufactured ones, have value, and people will pay for them" (96). The city dwellers of the Taisho and early-Showa era suffered the same loss as many other countries did due to modernity, loss of community. These eras reflected a sense of loneliness and lack of human interaction as one would experience in their natal dwellings in the countryside. These effects are clearly seen in figures such as dancehall women, who most likely sought out dancehalls for economic reasons, and patrons of dancehalls who most likely went for entertainment purposes, or to be in the company of women. They could buy companionship and the touch of a woman through the form of dance. Outside of the taxi dancers and their patrons, others went to show off their social skills, fashion, and for a bit of fun. Their involvement in dancing was less forced and went somewhat beyond going through the steps, counts, and motions codified for ballroom dances. No matter how shallow their reason may or may not have been, these places became spaces where citizens' senses could run wild, as can be seen in the quote given by Vera Mackie in chapter two (see pages 33-34 of this thesis).

In a section of her article "Ballroom Dance as an Indicator of Immigrant Identity in the Filipino Community" Carolina San Juan discusses the function of dance spaces to the community attending them. She notes that "[w]ithin these spaces, Filipinos find safety from outside forces and room for sub-communities to develop inside dominant culture" (San Juan 178). While the subjects of her argument are Filipinos in America during the present day, dancehalls still served these purposes to indigenous participants looking

toward a foreign space for entertainment. Replacing the Filipino subjects with the *moga, mobo*, and middle class participants of the 20s and 30s, we see the similar pattern of dance spaces, as well as foreign spaces in general, facilitating sub-cultural practices and forming some sense of community. The dancehall delineated people from the outside world and in some ways served similar functions as the pleasure quarters and *yujo* of Edo did.  These new western spaces, particularly the dancehall, acted as a space where one could lose their senses and both Japanese and western practices could be performed.

### Orientalism, Occidentalism, & the exotic 'Other' at Play

In the article "'Shall We *Dansu*?': Dancing with the 'West' in contemporary Japan," Ofra Goldstein-Gidoni and Michal Daliot-Bul discuss the relationship between the 'West,' as imagined by Japan.  The connection with the West is maintained through a constant comparison of a flattened view of western culture and a condensed interpretation of the Japanese identity. In his book *Orientalism* Edward Said says, "…Orientalists, like many other early-nineteenth-century thinkers, conceive of humanity either in large collective terms or in abstract generalities," he then goes on to say that,

> [s]imilarly, the age-old distinction between "Europe" and "Asia"…herds beneath very wide labels every possible human plurality, reducing it in the process to one or two terminal, collective abstractions" (154-5).

The images created of the other are static, non-evolving definitions that help to define nationality or self-image in relation to the 'Other.' In the case of Japan, the 'West' functions as their 'Other' with which they define themselves by what they are not. Goldstein-Gidioni and Daliot-Bul corroborate this by saying

> This cultural process of imaging the Other is an active process that combines Anderson's idea[6] of the imagined community in the sense of constructing a cultural identity (68).

It is an exoticism[7] that works to create a unified national identity *vis-à-vis* the West. Thus, engaging with ballroom—a western import—lets the individual pull away from the community in small ways. This does not mean that by dancing ballroom the participants long to be western. However, ballroom dancing creates a sense of liberation from cultural bounds or expectations; an alternate reality by which Japanese people can engage anytime they step onto the dance floor.

In addition to the discussion of Orientalism and Occidentalism, Goldstein-Gidoni and Daliot-Bul describe the concept of alternate realities and play. One of the realities created through ballroom dance is an imagined 'West,' and the authors further their point saying

> [b]y broadening the horizons of cultural possibilities, the 'West' as an inspirational source of imagined alternative existences represents opportunities that can even be incorporated into real life (Goldstein and Daliot 64).

When the authors refer to the 'West' they are not referring to a geographic location in terms of Japan, but rather a standpoint between the Occident and the Orient. This relationship between Orientalism and Occidentalism works in a cyclical process where both concepts work to flatten entire regions into simplified essentials of what it means to be "western" or "eastern." In addition to this wide-angled perception, looking specifically at the individual, a person who engages with this alternate reality, is emancipated from their cultural reality, allowing them to explore different ways of self-expression. This shift also changes the scope of the self from a narrow perception to one that can be expanded to endless possibilities.

Tying these concepts back into the time periods written about in this thesis, the evolution of an imagined West can be seen in each era. The 'West' that Japanese government officials and intellectuals engaged in the Meiji Era was mainly the social genteel culture of European aristocracy. Thus, balls and ballroom dancing overall reflected proper western etiquette. In the Taisho and early-Showa periods, ballroom became less of an example for western manners and functioned as a space of leisure. Although the Japanese elite still used these dances for socializing with westerners, the masses were not concerned with proper etiquette of the West and how to interact with foreigners, simply because it was not necessary. For the ordinary citizen, social dancing represented images of western romance and sexuality. In the section "Resistance of Japaneseness" Karatsu describes Japaneseness and what it meant in terms of Occidentalism and Orientalism. She says that

> [s]ince the opening of Japan in the nineteenth century, Japan has acquired its version of asceticism…including propriety, strict manners, correct appearance, and reliable obedience…According to Japanese Occidentalism, Western culture embodies individualism and self-exhibitionism, attributes that contravene essential Japanese values…Japan displayed both an attraction to ballroom dancing and a repulsion from many things associated with it (Karatsu 425-26).

Participants could assert their independence and break from the overbearing image of the Japanese essence. In dancehalls, they did not have to worry about upholding images of "Good Wife, Wise Mother," the diligent salary man, or hardworking university student. Their only label when they entered a dancehall was customer, and from a generic identity such as this, they could chose for themselves how to engage in a cultural play with the West and their Japanese identity.

### *Shall We Dansu?: A Multi-layer Reflection of the Past*

Although *Shall We Dansu?* [8] premiered in 1996, about seventy years past the time of pre-war Japan, many of the dynamics within the movie mirror what dancing could have been like for city dwellers during the 1920s and 30s. The movie focuses on the main character Shohei Sugiyama, a Japanese accountant, who is living the ideal Japanese life. He has a wife, a daughter, and a wonderful home in the suburbs; however, he is tired of his mundane routine. His life takes an exciting turn when he decides to take ballroom lessons and meets an unlikely group of friends who are also looking from some change in their lives. In the beginning of the movie, an invisible narrator describes the paradox of Japanese people's interest in ballroom dancing. The narrator says,

> [i]n Japan, ballroom dance is regarded with much suspicion. In a country where married couples don't go out arm and arm, much less say "I love you" out loud…intuitive understanding is everything. The idea that a husband and wife should embrace and dance in front of others is beyond embarrassing. However to go out dancing with someone else would be misunderstood and prove more shameful. Nonetheless, even for Japanese people, there is a secret wonder…about the joys that dance can bring (Suo 1996).

If this was a quote given for a movie in 1996, how much more would this apply to the men and women of the 1920s and 30s? Life and status between men and women had changed, but cultural values are hard to break through. The wonderment of ballroom dancing the narrator speaks of suggests that ballroom fulfilled a role the characters were missing in their everyday lives. Then the question becomes what was missing? And how did ballroom fulfill this role?

Using characters' lives in the movie, we can see how cultural play works to transform the lives of each participant. Dancing occurs mainly in a space briefly mentioned throughout this thesis, the dance studio. The people in the past eras had to

learn ballroom dancing before going on to a dance floor, so the dance studio, or rather just a space dedicated to the purpose of learning couples' dances, becomes a very important and safe space. Bryant Simon describes sociologist Elijah Anderson's idea of how to create a "cosmopolitan canopy." He states that

> [t]hese [cosmopolitan canopies] were sites where different kinds of people gather and feel safe enough to let down their guard and open themselves to new music, food, new experiences, new ideas, and even new people. This takes some repetition. Usually the same people come over and over again…and the people working there are also the same each time. This familiarity creates a sense of security and gives these places great potential for meaningful talk (Simon 97).

While the dancehalls of the 20s & 30s may not have facilitated these types of discussion due to their nature, the dance studio in *Shall We Dansu?* is a place where the characters can discreetly practice ballroom dancing and establish a community through a shared practice. The teachers and students are constant customers, allowing for the possibility of a safe, cosmopolitan canopy or third space to emerge.  Although ballroom lessons are a commodity, since students have to pay for the lessons, money becomes secondary to the primary focus of practicing ballroom dancing. This becomes apparent when all of the characters enter into an amateur dance competition and Tomoko (the older dance instructor) offers to teach the students for free after regular practice time. These factors allow for the beginnings of a community and for transformation to occur within each of the characters' lives.

In their article, Goldstein-Gidioni and Daliot-Bul analyze the main characters of *Shall We Dansu?* based on their relationship to the world of ballroom.  Mai, the young and shy dance instructor, is viewed, along with all the main female characters in the film, as a guide into the realm of fantasy. Goldstein-Gidioni and Daliot-Bul particularly view Mai as a Cinderella figure who searches for her "perfect impersonation of the ideal

Western-style gentleman who would protect his female partner's body no matter what obstacles they may encounter" (66). The authors then go on to describe how Japanese women act as gateways or guides within the field of play. They elaborate that

> Mai and other leading female characters in the film, including Tomoko, the elder instructor, and Toyoko, the meticulous and extravagant veteran dancer, are portrayed as taking the role of guiding others into the realm of fantasy (Goldstein-Gidioni and Daliot-Bul 66).

Just as the *yujo* of Edo, these women connected the male characters to a fantasy world and taught them the rules and etiquette of this domain. When Sugiyama has a rough time understanding the steps Tomoko patiently guides him along, as well as his other male companions. The men become more than overworked, undesirables of society (with the exception of Sugiyama who is set as the ideal). Their lowly social status does not matter on the dance floor, only their skill. This liberates not only women but also men from strict societal expectations of being providers for their families.

But how does the ballroom engage these characters to create liberations and communities? The answer to these questions comes from the fact that ballroom dancing lives outside of Japanese traditional culture. Due to this key fact, when the characters dance or go dancing, they are automatically entering a realm that will put different demands on their physical, cultural, and mental spaces. Since ballroom dancing can be viewed as a piece of western culture, dancers from a non-white, European stance begin a dialogue between their cultures and perceived western culture through the physical steps of ballroom dances and how they are meant to be danced. This freedom can be seen in Aoki's statement when he describes to Sugiyama how he feels when he dances. He says,

> [p]eople think dancing's only for losers. Especially since I'm single of course they [co-workers] think I'm just after girls…[but when I dance] I'm so happy, so completely free (*Shall We Dansu?).*

The societal judgment surrounding dancing as an unacceptable hobby for 'normal' or 'cool' individuals shows that, at least for men, ballroom dancing lies outside of the realm of Japaneseness and is considered an oddity. However, in this outer layer Aoki finds freedom and can build himself an identity that cannot be touched by Japanese society. Many of the other characters, including Sugiyama, find a piece of what had been missing from their lives by participating in ballroom and these lessons do just stay on the dance floor.

For these characters, ballroom dancing does not remain in the realm of cultural play.  Each of the characters engages the West in their own way, whether through Aoki's Donnie Burns[9] impersonation or Sugiyama teaching his wife to dance, the play of ballroom cannot always be contained to the ballroom. Karatsu clarifies this by saying

> …performers, as are all athletes, are transformed by their long term participation [in dance]. This is because performances in leisure contexts transform means of regular change of partners, learning recalled memories, self-realization, through making new friends and maintaining old friendships, and for many, by creating a truly new, or renewed, body…(422).

By the end of the movie, the characters clearly develop a deeper sense of self and this ripples throughout all of their relationships. The dance studio functions as a third space where the characters can bring in their troubles with themselves and the world around them and interact with all people they would not have normally encountered, much less talk to, in their everyday lives. Their engagement with different types of people and a non-traditional Japanese activity facilitate beneficial changes within themselves and their lives.  From this movie, we can see the transition from Meiji to Taisho to the modern era of how the involvement with dance affected each participant in his or her own time period. In this respect, some of the concepts surrounding ballroom changed; however, the

interaction between foreign and domestic culture continues as a constant, which allowed

anyone who truly participated to reach some form of liberation from their surroundings.

# CHAPTER 3 ENDNOTES

[1] Ethan, the man mentioned in the quote, was one of the dancer Bosse spoke to at the Regent Ballroom and Banquet in Savoy, Illinois. He was very anxious and excited about taking latin/rhythm ballroom lesson. He was known for being horrible at these types of dances, and when Bosse inquired as to why he was so anxious to learn salsa when he was already skilled in all of the moder/smooth/standard dances his response was "I want to get ethnic!...I'm tired of being white" (Bosse 19).

[2] *Kabuki odori* refers to kabuki dancing, *goshugimono*, also known as *su odori*, is dance with spiritual roots stemming from religious ceremony, *kamigata mai* are pieces from the *geisha* tradition, most often including a fan, *sosaku buyo* are dances that do not fit into the three categories above and are newly choreographed (Hahn 24).

[3] *Iki,* meaning "breath," "spirit," or "an artistic way of life," refers to the spiritual state that brings techniques and movements to life. *Ma* is a complex concept and refers to the space or time between one movement to the next. The time between movements is not an empty space filled with nothing, but a charged space filled with energy. There is no direct translation of *ma* and the concept of *ma* has developed over a long period of time and is very important in the Japanese artistic tradition. *Utsuri* means transition and is a technical term denoting the change between moods, characters, and situations, as well as, different motions of the body (i.e. feet, head, hands). In addition to *ma*, *utsuri* is considered one of the hardest concepts to master (Gunji 71-3). Gunji also speaks of a "spirit of play" and says, "Nowadays teachers and choreographers of Japanese dance have become oversophisticated and indulge in bitter rivalry" (78). He says that culture should be found in play, but he never defines exactly what play is.

[4] The quote Hahn is responding to is "If you live your life fully outside the dance studio, then your dancing will grow and come to life" (47).

[5] Leading and following corresponds to the two roles typically taken on by ballroom dancers. Leads— traditionally men—create the structure of the dances giving the cues for their partner to follow. Follows— traditionally women— interpret the cues and react to their partner's guidance. Leading and following can be compared to a picture painted in a frame; the lead creates frame and structure guiding the dance, while the follow receives the leads cues and guidance creating the vivid hues, colors, and motions of the dance.

[6] This refers back to Benedict Anderson's concepts of nations as "imaged communities," which is discussed in chapter one of this thesis, page 13.

[7] Exoticism as defined by Savigliano is the practice of representation through which identities are frivolously allocated. It is also a will to power over the unknown, an act of indiscriminately combining fragments, crumbs of knowledge and fantasy, in disrespectful, sweeping gestures justified by harmless banality (169).

[8] *Shall We Dansu?* (1996) was written and directed by Masayuki Suo. Besides the original Japanese movie, an American version was made in 2004 starring Richard Gere, Susan Sarandon, and Jennifer Lopez.

[9] Donnie Burns (1959~) is a Scottish professional ballroom dancer specializing in Latin ballroom.

# Conclusion

*To be known…is important. It gives you a sense of belonging.*

-a quote by Ray Oldenburg in Bryant Simon's *Everything but the Coffee*

This quote taken from Bryant Simon's chapter "It Looks Like a Third Place" sums up the many feelings and transformations ballroom dancing has lived throughout the Meiji, Taisho, early-Showa, and modern eras. The officials and people of the Meiji Era had a desire to be recognized by the rest of the world in terms of their people, intellect, sophistication, and culture. Ballroom dancing functioned as a display of all of these skills western genteel society highly valued. Ballroom as social capital was meant to transfer over to the political realm and help gain Japan equal status and respect from other world powers (i.e. western nations). Although the attempt to adopt the western soul ultimately failed, ballroom dancing took a foothold in Japan.

In the Taisho and early-Showa periods the transformation and development of cities, particularly Tokyo, due to environmental factors such as the Great Kanto earthquake, caused an influx of people to migrate to the city. To accommodate the developing middle-class and city dwellers, western pastimes were incorporated into city culture. Through the space of dancehalls and ballrooms, ballroom dancing became a new commodity to be consumed by the youth and working classes of Tokyo and other major cities. Unlike the politically aimed agenda of the Meiji Era, ballroom during this time functioned more as a space to create sub-cultures and liberation from one's daily existence through the practice of a foreign import. However, the dancehall could not and did not exist outside of Japanese cultural morals and expectations, as can be seen through

the novel *Naomi*.  Intellectuals and government officials of this era considered dancehalls as places of empty pleasures and a waste of time. Due to these associations with ballroom dance, dancehalls and spaces where ballroom dancing took place were heavily suppressed and eventually banned.

Over the course of these time periods, ballroom dance developed into a third space where Japanese participants could both engage the foreign and domestic aspects of ballroom. Through the reversal of Orientalism and the imaginations of the Japanese government/intellectuals, Japan fashioned an identity for itself *vis-à-vis* the West. From the formation of this standard defining Japanese identity, both women and men fought to liberate themselves from these confines through ballroom dance as a means of cultural play. In the minds of Japanese participants, ballroom dance represented a piece of western culture.

While ballroom dancing was not completely foreign to Japanese participants because it embodied similar qualities and ethos of traditional Japanese dance, this association somewhat separated ballroom dancing as a culture import, therefore placing it slightly outside of Japanese culture. Thus, when participants engaged in ballroom dancing, a conversation ensued between known cultural practices and the new demands that ballroom dancing placed on participants' bodies and minds. These dialogues helped dancers expand their cultural bounds and experience life from a new perspective.  In these ways, Japanese people were able to engage the West both literally and psychologically, creating a space where they were able to unlock a different side of their being, repressed through their everyday existence.  Granted, everyone who participated did not dance as a way to liberate themselves, but rather out of curiosity, exercise or

socialization, but it does not change the fact that ballroom dancing diverged from the standard.

Whether engaged in serious play or not, ballroom dancing brought cultures and heritages from around the world to the everyday person's world.  As ballroom changed from a political tool, to a commodity, and then to a pastime, the ability for ballroom dancing to create a third space and community grew even stronger. Theses connections could not be facilitated through a textbook or a lecture, but through a lived and practiced experience. Ballroom offered a sampling of culture and re-enactment of said culture to a certain degree. In these ways, ballroom dancing fused together Japanese and western cultures that in some ways transcended national bounds and directly engaged a universal human experience.

# Appendix I: Images



Figure 1: Painting of *kabuki* dance from an 18<sup>th</sup> century scroll depicting scenes from *kabuki* performances. Owned by the Tokugawa Reimeikai, Tokyo.
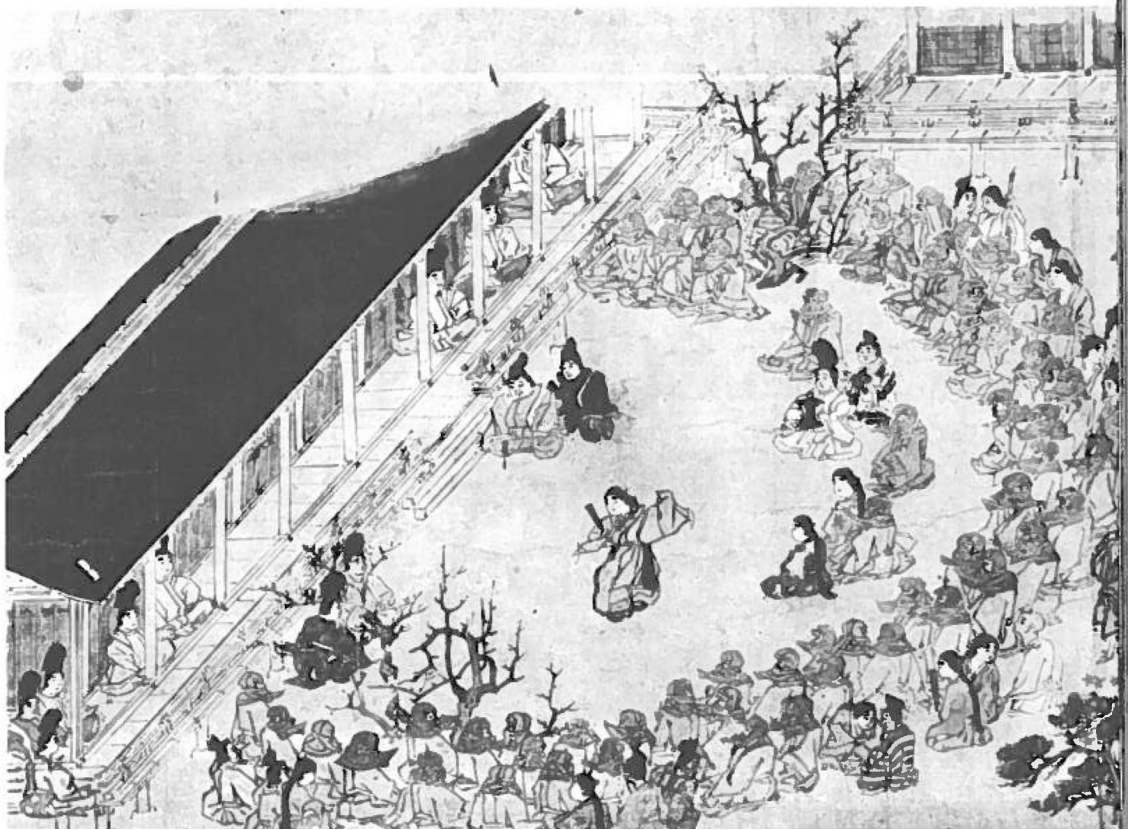
Figure 2: *Chigo ennen* dance from the Kamakura period (1185    1333) picture scroll *Honin Shonen Eden*. Owned by the Chion-in, Kyoto.



Figure 3: *Furyu* dance from an Edo period (1603    1868) screen painting displaying spring and fall entertainment. Owned by the Suntory Art Gallery, Tokyo.
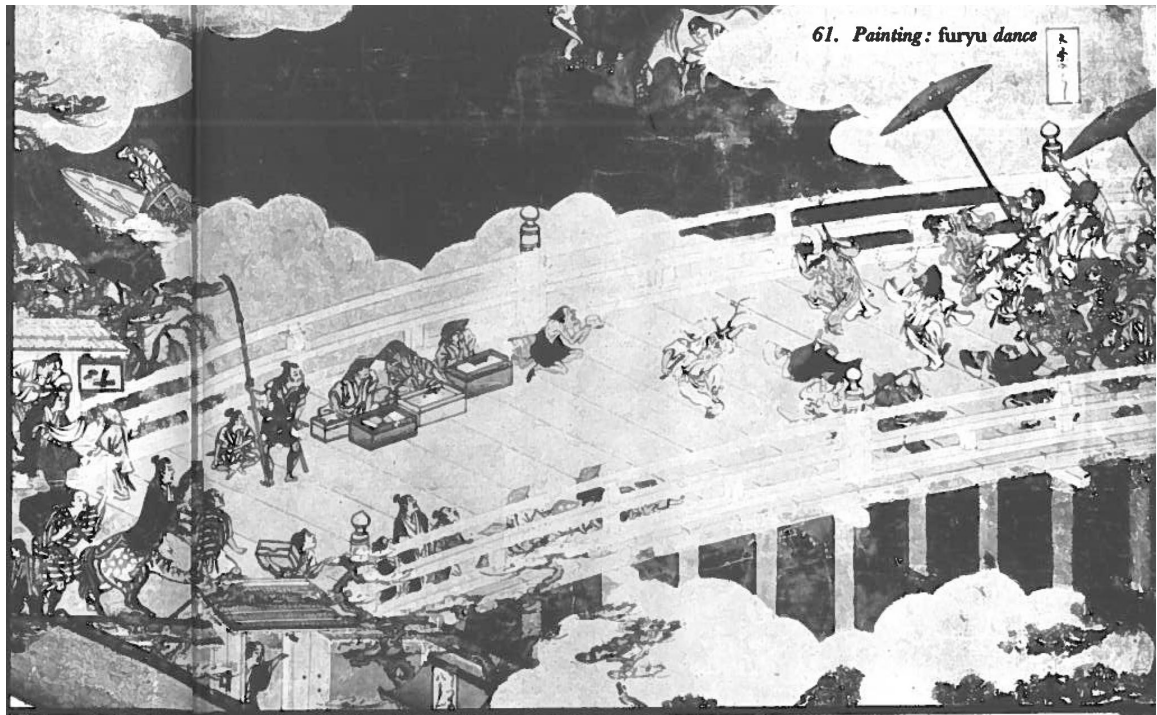
Figure 4: *Furyu* dance on bridge from Muromachi period (1338–1573) screen painting showing monthly customs. Owned by the Tokyo National Museum, Tokyo.
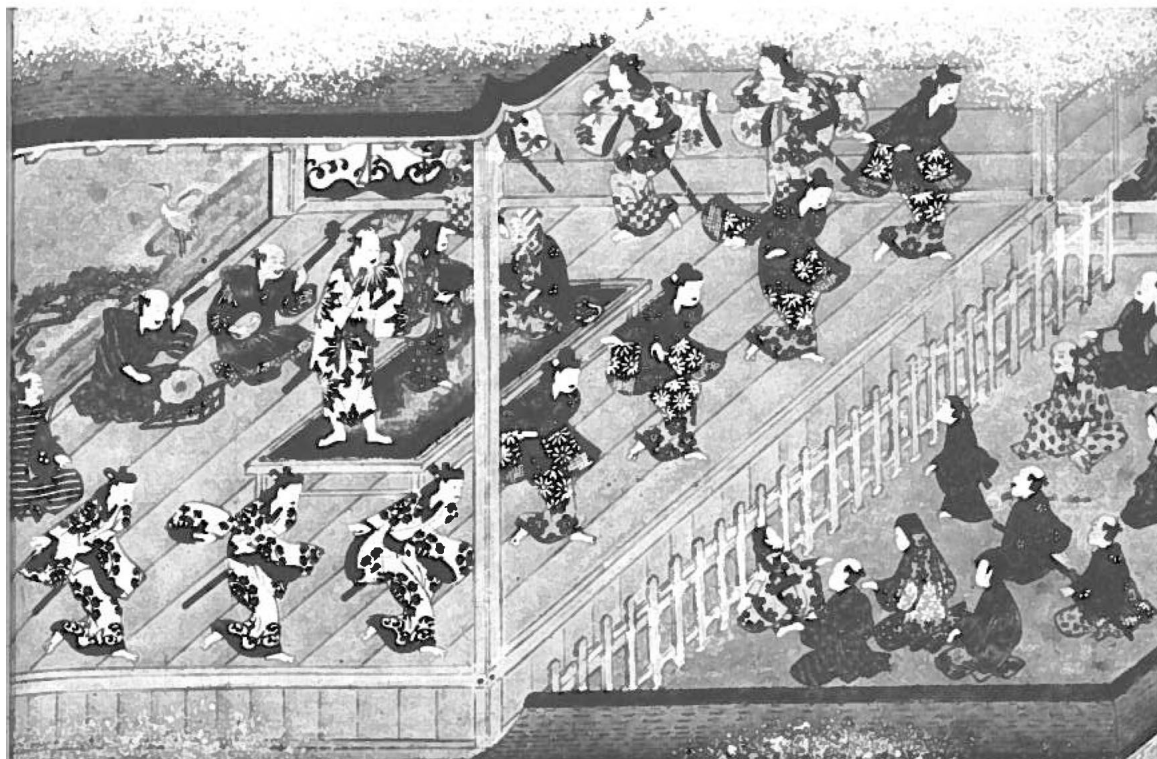


Figure 5: *Yaro (Men's) Kabuki* from a scroll depicting scenes of *kabuki* performances.

Figure 6: *Onna (Women's) Kabuki* from an early seventeenth century screen painting showing scenes at Shijo-gawara in Kyoto. Owned by Domoto Shiro, Kyoto.

63. *Painting: Edo-period male dancer*

64. *Painting: Edo-period male dancer*

65. *Painting: Edo-period dancing girl*

Figure 7: Edo period (1603—1868) painting of two male dancers and a *maiko* (young female entertainer). From left to right: Owned by the Nakamura Shogoro, Ichikawa, Chiba Prefecture; Owned by the Atami Art Museum, Shizuoka Prefecture; Owned by the Suntory Art Gallery, Tokyo.

Figure 8: *Miko* performing a Shinto Shaden *kagura* dance during the annual On-Matsuri festival, a traditional Shinto religious festival held at the Kasuga Wakamiya Shrine in Nara. Photo by Torin Boyd.



Figure 9: *Miko* performing *kagura* at the Fushimi Inara Taisha in Kyoto.

Figure 10: A *maiko* (young female entertainer) of Kyoto's Gion district dancing the *jiuta-mae* piece from *Kurokami*.

Figure 11: Dancing girl (*maiko*) from an Edo period (1603   1868) painting (originally a six-fold screen) picturing dancers of the time. Owned by the Suntory Art Gallery, Tokyo.

67. Painting: Bon Festival dance

Figure 12: Bon festival dancing from an album of twelve painting depicting customs of twelve months. Owned by Yamaguchi Hoshun, Hayama, Kanagawa Prefecture.

Figure 13: Dengaku dance at the Gosho Hachiman Shrine, Fukuchiyama, Kyoto
Prefecture. Photo by *Asahi Journal*.

Figure 14: The Peers Club, formerly known as the Rokumeikan, after the 1897 construction.



Figure 15: *Chikamatsu Kiken Buto no Ryakuke* by Chikanobu depicting dancing at the Rokumeikan (1888).

Figure 16: Western-style dancing during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. *La Danse des Salons* by Henri Cellarius. Paris, 1847.

Figure 17: A couple performing a waltz. *La Danse des Salons* by Henri Cellarius. Paris, 1847.

Figure 18: Promotional flyer for a performance by Kobayashi Taihei and Eguchi Yuko in 1990. The legend states that the dancers "learned directly in Argentina, the birthplace of tango, from Gloria and Eduardo" (cited in Marta E. Savigliano's *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion*).
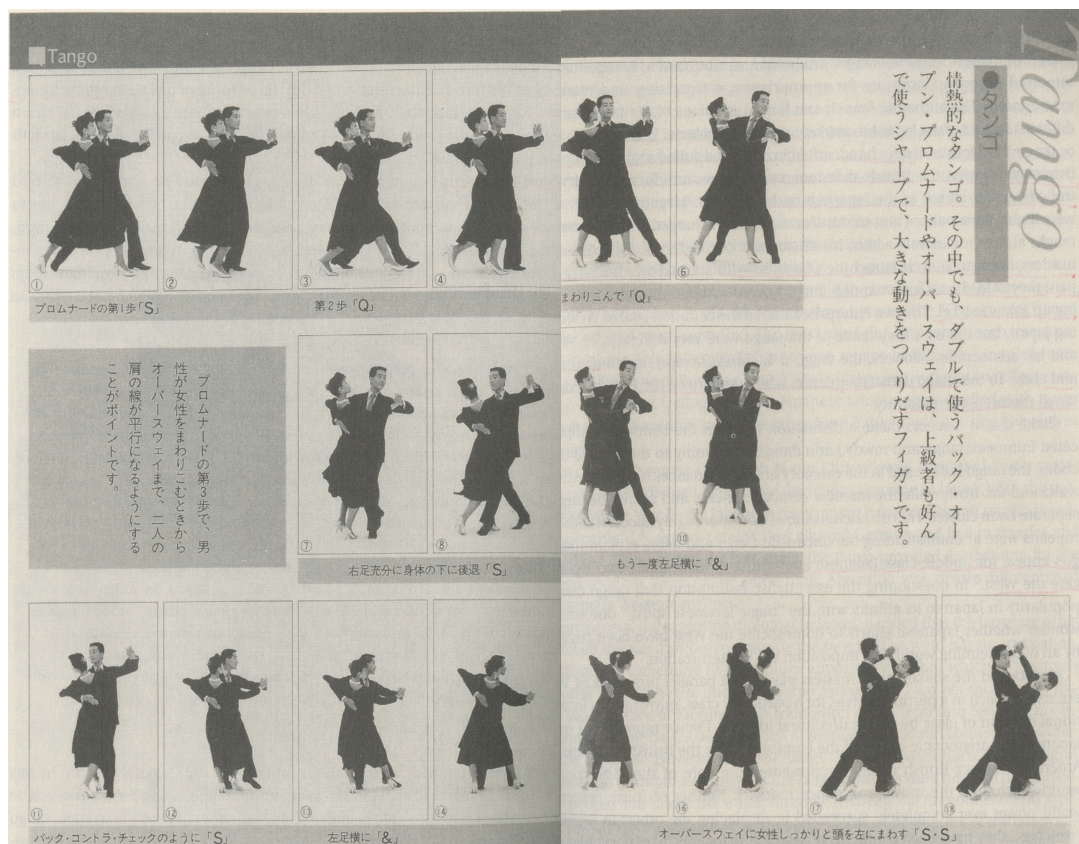
Figure 19: This pamphlet shows a series of tango steps. The legend on the right-hand side of the page reads: "Passionate Tango: The back open promenade and the over sway are well-like and used even by high class people. Together they create a big moment" (cited in Marta E. Savigliano's *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion*).

Figure 20: Asahi Graph's special issue promoting an tango argentine show produced by Claudio Segovia and Hector Orezzoli in 1983.

Figure 21: A couple displaying the tango over-sway figure.

Figure 22: Juan Canaro's tango orchestra dining in Japan, 1954.



Figure 23: Cover of Ranko Fujisawa and Ikuo Abo's album *Tango en Kimono*, RCA Victor Argentina, 1964.

Figure 24: Cover of Luis Alposta's book *El Tango en Japon*.

Figure 25: Picture of ballroom couple performing a latin dance number. Costumes are much tighter and reveal more skin in order to project the "sexier, passionate" qualities of this genre.



Figure 26: Smooth/modern/standard dances display more gliding and elegant steps. Performers' costumes reflect the elegant and elegiac mood of these dances.

# Appendix II: Definitions & Time Period

| Japanese Time Periods (from Nara to modern-day) |
| :---: |
| Nara Period (710 – 784) |
| Heian Period (794 – 1185) |
| Kamakura Period (1192 – 1333) |
| Muromachi Period (1338 – 1573) |
| Azuchi/Momoyama Period (1573 – 1603) |
| Edo Period (1603 – 1868) |
| Meiji Period (1868 – 1912) |
| Taisho (1912 – 1926) |
| Early-Showa (1926 – 1945) |
| Late-Showa (1945 – 1989) |
| Heisei (1989 ~) |

*Note: There are time periods that pre-date the Nara period.

= Time periods mentioned in thesis

= Time periods frequently discussed

= Mentioned in endnotes

# Definitions

bon-festival   a summer Buddhist festival that celebrates ones' ancestors and honors the spirits of the dead.  It has been celebrated in Japan for the past five centuries

dengaku   derived from folk dances done in the fields and countryside of Japan, such as the rice-planting ritual, which were refined and brought to the cities as entertainment. Dengaku has elements of bugaku and sangaku (the imported dances from China, India, and Korea) and is danced with many people who play instruments as they dance

ennen   popular at large temples and shrines during the end of the Heian period and into the Kamakura period. Ennen was a form of dance drama and compiled song, dance, and dialogue.  It was performed by monks and priests at banquets held at the temples and shrines

exotic/exoticism   as defined by Marta Savigliano as a practice of representation through which identities are frivolously allocated. It is also a will to power over the unknown, an act of indiscriminately combining fragments, crumbs of knowledge and fantasy, in disrespectful, sweeping gestures justified by harmless banality

fūryū odori   a popular style of dance during the Muromachi period characterized by vigorous leaps and jumps

gagaku   a fusion of gigaku, bugaku, and sangaku with indigenous entertainment, which is preserved to this day in a special section of the imperial household

gigaku   a masked Buddhist ritual

goshugimono   also known as su odori, gushugimono is a  category of dance containing traditional Japanese dances that are spiritual in nature and stem from religious ceremony

ideoscape   a concept created by Arjun Appadurai. Ideoscapes are concatenations of images that are often directly political and frequently have to do with ideologies of states and the counterideologies of movements explicitly oriented to capturing state power or a piece of it

iki   meaning "breath," "spirit," or "an artistic way of life," refers to the spiritual state that brings techniques and movements to life

jionna   meaning women of the soil, refers to Edo period women that are not in the business of entertainment, particularly wives

kabukimono   meaning strange or crazy ones, this phrase refers to the "lost soldiers" who made a name for themselves after they came to fight in the war  in Kyoto, but were left without a cause due to the establishment of the Tokugawa shogunate

kagura   Japan's oldest dance form, kagura was said to have emerged from the legend of the sun goddess Amaterasu and the Rocj-cave of Heaven . There are other types of kagura and they are as follows: mi-kagura, referring to kagura performed at the imperial court, and sato-kagura, referring to kagura performed at village festivals

kamigata mai   a category containing pieces from the geisha tradition, most often including a fan

*Kojiki*   Records of Ancient Matters, a native, mythical chronicle produced in the eighth century about the origin and creation of Japan

kowaka mai   a dance performed with a fan as the dancer chants stories of ancient battles. A drum is played during the performance and the dancer's costume consists of a tall-black lacquered hat and the same formal dress feudal-warriors would wear on special occasions

kyōgen komai   developed from the popular songs and dances of the day known as furyu.  It was performed as a comic interlude in *Noh* drama.

ma   a complex concept that refers to the space or time between one movement to the next.  The time between movements is not an empty space filled with nothing, but a charged space filled with energy. There is no direct translation of ma and the concept of ma has developed over a long period of time and is very important in Japanese cultural and art history. Ma does not only pertain to dance but Japanese arts in general

miko   specifically refer to the priest and priestess that perform kagura.  To this day people who perform kagura are still called miko and serve as the priestesses of Shinto shrines

mizushōbai   ("water trade") is associated with the flirtation of a sexual encounter that is never fulfilled.  These practices are closely associated with the sex industry in Japan and hostesses working in nightclubs or bars. During the Taisho and early-Showa period these practices also extended to café waitress and other establishments with female servers

mobo   the abbreviation for modern boy, refers to men who dressed in western dress and adopted a non-traditional, modern attitude

moga   the abbreviation for modern girl, refer to women who dressed in western dress, cut their hair short, and partook in western fashions and pastimes

Nihon buyō   Japanese traditional dance, referring mainly to kabuki dance.  Nihon is the Japanese word for Japan. And buyō is the Japanese word for dance.  The bu in buyō can also be pronounced mai, which refers more so to the court dance, upper-class theater dance, ritualistic and religious dances, and the dances of Noh drama. The yō, which can also be pronuced odori, refers to the dances of the Edo period, particularly the popular and kabuki dance forms developed in 17th  19th centuries. Odori also indicates a stylistic difference. While mai indicates upper class and refined dances, odori indicates dances derived from rustic festival dances and other dances of the common people that were considered "rougher and inartistic"

Occidentalism   the opposite of Orientalism. A flattened image of all western nations into simplified essentials of what it means to be "western"

Orientalism   Orientalism works to take vast stretches of land, cultures, and people and herd them under the title "Orient," which in one word prescribes a set, non-evolving definition for all Asian nations of what it means to be, think, and live as an "eastern" person

sangaku   a dance that included mime and acrobatic aspects. Sangaku was a foreign import, mainly used as court entertainment

sōsaku buyō   are dances that do not fit into the neatly into established categories of traditional Japanese dance and are newly choreographed

taxi dancehall   created during the prohibition era in America the taxi dancehall served as a place where men could socialize with women without the use or sale of alcohol. Men would purchase tickets to dance with women who worked at the dancehall as hired dance partners.

taxi dancer   women who worked at taxi dancehalls

third space   An established location where people can meet outside of home and the workplace. A third space is not economically driven and is meant to be a safe place where people get to know people different from themselves and facilitate new relationships

utsuri   means transition and is a technical term denoting the change between moods, characters, and situations, as well as, different motions of the body (i.e. feet, head, hands)

yūjo   means women of pleasure, referring to women of the pleasure district and who entertained men as their occupation

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