

**Indigenous Corporeal Presence:
Bulareyaung Dance Company's *LUNA*
and Indigenous Territorial Issues**

原住民身體的存在性：
布拉瑞揚舞團《路訥》與土地正義等議題

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Abstract

In January 2019, as part of the 2018 Taipei Biennial titled “Post-Nature: A Museum as an Ecosystem,” at the Taipei Museum of Fine Arts (TFAM), I attended a performance by the Bulareyaung Dance Company (BDC). They were invited by the “Indigenous Justice Classroom,” an extension of the Indigenous people’s protest against traditional territorial rights on Ketagalan Boulevard outside of the Presidential Building in Taipei back in February 2017.

LUNA ‘s TFAM abbreviated outdoor version, under the surrounding of the Ketagalan protest tents, towels, and rocks hand-painted by supporters, touched audiences that attended this free event. In fact, this TFAM event was titled: “For Whom are We Dancing?” After the performance, one of the key initiators of the Ketagalan protest—indigenous singer Panai Kusui—shared her thoughts in relation to the territorial reclamation issues. Bulareyaung asked each of his dancers to answer the question: “For Whom do they dance?” All this time, documentary director Mayaw Biho, another initiator of the Ketagalan protest, was filming and broadcasting the event live through social media.

Dance performances now take place for various reasons, not simply to fulfill the artistic vision of the choreographer, but also toward the greater common goal of the community. Having collaborated with international dance companies, indigenous artist Bulareyaung return to

his hometown Taitung in the east coast of Taiwan in 2015 in search of his indigenous identity. *LUNA* is an landmark production toward his artistic journey in exploring the rich topic of body and indigeneity.

Through discourses on local knowledge by anthropologist Julie Cruikshank, Jacques Derrida's concept of ontopology, as well as dance scholars Jacqueline Shea Murphy's writing on Native American dance, and Ya-ping Chen's observations of the contemporary dance scene in Taiwan, I unravel how the *topos*, corporeality, and indigeneity intertwine.

Keywords: Bulareyaung Dance Company (BDC), *LUNA*, local knowledge, Indigeneity, ontopology

摘要

2019 年布拉瑞揚舞團受邀在台北市立美術館的「台北雙年展」以「後自然：美術館作為一個生態系統」為主題的「原轉小教室」演出。這是繼 2017 年在總統府前的凱達格蘭大道上，原住民爭取土地正義的抗爭之延續。這場在北美館戶外中庭演出的《路吶》精選版，由移自凱達格蘭大道抗爭者使用的帳篷，毛巾，或支持者手繪的石頭...等富有意義的物件所環繞，場景氛圍精心設計，令人印象深刻。

這場取名為：「為誰而跳？」的演出結束時，發起「沒有人是局外人」的歌手巴奈擔任主持人，分享她觀賞表演的想法與感受。布拉也邀請舞者們一一回答他們「為誰而舞」？「為誰而演」？期間，原住民紀錄導演馬躍比吼，也是凱達格蘭示威抗爭的另一位發起者，一路進行拍攝，同步線上直播整場的演出與對話。

布拉瑞揚擁有頂尖舞團的豐富經歷，此刻選擇返回台東家鄉創團，尋找自己原民身分的認同。舞團自 2015 年創立五年來，透過不同的作品，挖掘身體與原民性的尖銳議題。本文參考人類學家庫依珊克（Julie Cruikshank）的「在地知識」與哲學家德希達（Jacques Derrida）的「地方本體論」（ontopology），並探討對原民身體的主體性。而舞蹈學者 Jacqueline Shea Murphy 對美國原住民舞蹈之研究，甚至舞蹈評論者陳雅萍對台灣舞蹈的觀察，也提供筆者思考《路吶》之身體、原民性，與地方相互交織的複雜議題。

關鍵字：布拉瑞揚舞團、《路吶》、在地知識、原民性、地方本體論

Prologue:

Indigenous territorial rights protests:

“No-one is an outsider” (沒有人是局外人)

This article attempts to contextualize the performances of the dance work *LUNA* by Bulareyaung Dance Company (BDC), how they engage with the embodiment of indigenous ways of life, as well as issues of indigenous territorial reclamation. Referencing Jacqueline Shea Murphy's study on Native American dance and Jacques Derrida's concept of ontology, among others, I argue how these indigenous dancing bodies on stage embody their own forms of knowledge and history, enacting the effect of dance as document of the indigenous understanding of cosmology.¹ According to anthropologist Julie Cruikshank, these understandings can be referred to as “local knowledge”—“tacit knowledge embodied in life experiences and reproduced in everyday behavior and speech” that deserves respect.²

My observation of Bulareyaung's career can be traced back to 2011 when he was one of the invited choreographers in the ArtsCross/DansCross international project for which I was the Co-Director from Taipei National University of the Arts (TNUA).³ Then in

¹ Jacqueline Shea Murphy, “Introduction,” in *The People Have Never Stopped Dancing: Native American Modern Dance Histories*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2007, pp. 1-26.

² Julie Cruikshank, *Do Glaciers Listen? Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters, & Social Imagination*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2005, p. 9.

³ Professor Ping Heng, then Dean of the School of Dance at TNUA was our team leader. Professor Yunyu Wang and I were the Co-Directors. The ArtsCross/Taipei Project is a collaboration with Middlesex University from London and the Beijing

the Spring of 2019, I led a graduate level course titled: “Critical Ecologies: Body and Indigeneity.” I took a group of 40 faculty, students and international scholars/artists on a three-day trip to Taitung on the east coast of Taiwan. This course involves faculty members from overseas partner universities which are part of an international collaboration called “Shared Campus.” I chose to focus on the “Critical Ecologies” theme as one of its clusters.⁴ Since the distance is approximately 330 kilometers from the capital city of Taipei in the north, we took a morning train down to the Bulareyaung Dance Company (BDC), based at the former Sugar Factory in Taitung City.

Bulareyaung Pagarlava (referred to as “Bula”) was born in 1972. He is of Paiwan indigenous descent, one of the 16 officially recognized indigenous groups in Taiwan, each with its own unique language and culture. Currently, there are more than 550,000 indigenous peoples on Taiwan, accounting for about 2.5 percent of Taiwan’s population of 23.5 million. Bula chose to set up his dance company in his home county,

Dance Academy. See the Rescen website from 2011 for more information:

http://www.rescen.net/events/ArtsCross_11/ArtsCross_1.html#.YAKafWQzaqA

⁴ “Shared Campus” is an international collaboration of seven partner institutions: City University of Hong Kong, School of Creative Media (SCM)

Hong Kong Baptist University, Academy of Visual Arts and Department of Music (HKBU)

Kyoto Seika University (SEIKA), Japan

LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore (LASALLE)

Taipei National University of the Arts (TNUA), Taiwan

University of the Arts London (UAL), United Kingdom

Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK), Switzerland.

It is “a cooperation platform for international education formats and research networks launched by seven arts institutions.” The mission is that “close cooperation is imperative to tackling issues of global significance. Especially the arts can, and indeed ought to, play an important role in this respect.” See the official website: <https://www.zhdk.ch/en/international/shared-campus>

where the indigenous Paiwan population are mostly based. In comparison to the West Coast of Taiwan (with the high-speed rail and two highways connecting the string of cities from north to south), Taitung manages to remain somewhat isolated and thus able to keep its more pristine natural environment.

Nevertheless, the struggle to protect this “last paradise” in Taiwan from the development of cement companies, mass tourism, and other outside corporations is an urgent call, especially among the indigenous artists within their communities. Taiwan’s incumbent female President TSAI Ying-wen (蔡英文) issued a formal apology to the indigenous peoples of Taiwan on August 1, 2016, where she atoned for 400 years of settler colonialism.⁵ This led to the creation of the “Commission for Indigenous Historical and Transitional Justice”. However, by February 2017, the new regulations announced by the Council of Indigenous Peoples (CIP)—to the disappointment of the indigenous activists—restricted the definition of the “traditional territory” to state-owned land only, and thus narrowing down from the vast 1.8 million hectares (approximately 50 percent of Taiwan’s area), to only 800,000 hectares instead. This exclusion of the private-owned land was one of the main reasons that led to the camp-out protest on Ketagalan Boulevard by

⁵ Scott Simon, “The Roots of Taiwan’s Indigenous Peoples Protests,” in *Taiwan Insight: The Online Magazine of the Taiwan Studies Programme*. University of Nottingham.

<https://taiwaninsight.org/2017/10/09/the-roots-of-taiwans-indigenous-peoples-protests/>

Published 9 Oct. 2017. Accessed 28 January 2019.

indigenous activist-musicians Panay Kusui and her husband Nabu Husungan, as well as documentary filmmaker Mayaw Biho. The movement's slogan was: "No one is an outsider."⁶

About a hundred days later (on June 3, 2017), the protest site was destroyed by the police, and the activists resettled to the nearby National Taiwan University (NTU) Hospital metro station, near the February 28 Memorial Peace Park, turning it into an "Indigenous Justice Classroom (原轉小教室)." The artists-activists continue to create artworks on the spot while taking turns camping out. For example, they would paint rocks in various patterns and vibrant colors, or compose their own songs and sing out loud, or discuss indigenous related issues such as hunting rights.

When the 2018 Taipei Biennial was held at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum (TFAM) under the theme of "Post-Nature: A Museum as an Ecosystem," the curators (Wu Mali and Francesco Manacorda) invited these indigenous artists/activists into the museum. They not only exhibited the art/objects created during the outdoor protests, but extended the "Indigenous Justice Classroom" into the museum, along with a curated series of indigenous performances, lectures, and discussions.⁷ It was under such circumstances that I went to see BDC

⁶ "Indigenous Ketagalan Boulevard protest," from Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indigenous_Ketagalan_Boulevard_protest; and the official webpage of "No one is an outsider" in Chinese: <https://www.nooutsider.tw/land>, accessed 28 January 2019.

⁷ The 2018 Taipei Biennial Post-Nature was exhibited from 17 November 2018 to 10 March 2019. See <https://www.taipeibiennial.org/2018/information/102>

perform their work *LUNA* (2018) again, in the outdoor courtyard of the Museum, with the installations and other related objects from the Ketagalan Protests, setting the scene for their otherwise deliberately empty stage design in the indoor theatre versions.

BDC's *LUNA* (2018):

LUNA is the fifth production of BDC since the company's inaugural premiere of *La Song* 《拉歌》 in 2015. Its Chinese title 《路呐》 is a combination of two Chinese characters: *lu* (路) for road, and *na* (呐) for shout, incorporating the singing and the travelling steps, both integral elements of this production. The work was commissioned by the National Taichung Theatre. It was based on the fieldwork with the Bunun tribe, well-known for the polyphonic singing, as performed by the Luluna (羅娜) Bunun Choir. Coincidentally, the pronunciation of *LUNA* not only sounds close to the name of the Luluna choir, but also the Spanish word for moon "*luna*." In terms of the stage design, the moonlight could be interpreted as the guiding light, leading the way for the bodies crossing the dark space in the production; symbolically, it was also leading the indigenous people out of their current plight.

To perform *LUNA*, the BDC dancers had to learn a new Bunun language and a complex polyphonic choral technique, not to mention having to sing and dance on stage at the same time. This required a training of breathing techniques and listening skills, so as to either be in sync with the group, or engage in a call-and-response type of harmonic singing.

During our fieldtrip to Taitung in April of 2019, we were fortunate to attend a voice workshop led by BDC member Kwonduwa (孔柏元, known as Dudu 嘟嘟), who taught us how to extend the duration of breathing in, and breathing out, in order to lengthen our vocal sounds.⁸ As singing and dancing are often inseparable in indigenous communities, especially during their rituals, we were also introduced to some signature movement vocabulary that the BDC company often uses, which is walking in low crouched positions, with the center of gravity close to the ground. We were then split up into smaller groups, each with a BDC dancer leading us to sing, as we followed in harmony, in a call-and-response format.

Next, we would stand up and hold hands in a linear formation, as we continued singing and moving across their studio space, meandering and crisscrossing with the other groups, aware of our spatial positions along the way. Eventually, we all came together in one big line, as the leader would gradually speed up the tempo, and we all had to catch up while maintaining the synchronicity and harmony. No matter how tired I was, I had to keep going for the sake of the whole group. Otherwise, if one person breaks off, the community's effort would fall apart, literally.

Once the BDC dancers sped it up, it was truly challenging to keep up to pace, especially in terms of stamina. At times, some would accidentally let go of each other's hands, but quickly reconnected and continued on,

⁸ Dudu is an indigenous performing artist from the Puyuma tribe in Taitung, as well as a previous member and rehearsal director of the Formosa Aboriginal Song and Dance Troupe—one of the earliest indigenous performing arts ensemble founded in 1991. Bula was the guest choreographer for their production *Pu'ing: Tracing the Atayal Route* (《找路》) in 2013.

regardless. It was a true embodiment of the power of the community to incorporate each individual, and uplift the spirit of the entire group. After this extremely tiring exercise, most of us were exhausted, but exhilarated. It was an unforgettable experience to embody the physical sensation of how the dancers manage to perform a much longer and more challenging sequence on stage.

Such physical embodiment is most valuable for my analysis of *LUNA*, which I saw the full production version at the Cloud Gate Theatre in Taipei in June of 2018, and again in January 2019 at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum under the theme: “For Whom are We Dancing?”

“For Whom are We Dancing?” *LUNA* at TFAM, January 2019

Back at the TFAM outdoor courtyard, adjacent to the window pane, where the tents and paraphernalia objects used during the Ketagalan Protests are displayed inside the corridor, we see a big red yarn-wrapped standing sculpture of a lily in the center courtyard, surrounded by hand-painted rocks, creative products of the “Stone Art Relay Action” during the “No-one is an Outsider” movement. Against the wall in the back, is a triangular tepee-like structure made of bamboos, reaching up high. Surrounding the big white column is a spiral of red metal roadblocks, with Chinese phrases such as:

- “First Day of Camp-out in Protest of the Traditional Territories Designation Law”;

- “Protest of the Construction of the resort hotel overlooking *Meiliwan* (美麗灣, ‘Beautiful Bay’);
- “Atayal Tribe Conducts its autonomous rule via Tnunan-Smangus (司馬庫斯勞動合作社),” ... and so forth.

As audiences casually sit down on the floor and gather around this “stage,” taking in all this information related to the protest, we hear a man singing from afar. It is Dudu, BDC’s singing instructor and dancer, a large man with a deep voice who makes his way toward the audience, stepping in a forward bent position. Other dancers then join in from all corners of the open space, singing and stepping in a similar manner. In twos and threes, they eventually all gather close to center stage, but switch their movement vocabulary from simply stepping, to moving on all four, sometimes even with their buttocks on the ground, shifting their weight in synchrony, along with the rhythm they sing jointly, or in canon.

Actually, in the full-length version of *LUNA*, this section where the BDC dancers appears is the second half. The first half was a traditional scene performed by the Bunun tribal elders, adults, and even children, who come on stage in their traditional outfits. They sit or stand casually, creating unique rhythms from their daily life, such as: the pestle-pounding music *Tul Tul* (杵音), the *Pislahi* song (獵前祭槍歌 to pay respect to the guns and weapons before hunting), the *Pasibutbut* song (祈禱小米豐收歌 to pray for a good millet harvest), and the *Malastapan* song (報戰功 for

hunters to show off their catch).⁹ Echoing Shea Murphy's writing, such re-enactments of the songs and music from days past, is a valuable insight into the indigenous cultural heritage, when humans co-existed more closely to their natural ecologies with care and respect.

After this entrance section, a petite but powerful male dancer Aulu (aka Chinese name Kao Min-cheng 高旻辰, also a former TNUA alumnus, but from a different Paiwan community than Bula's) performs his virtuosic solo, clearly demonstrating his professional contemporary dance training. He flips forward, does a split, followed by a high kick and balance, then conduct other jumps in the air, as he lands and rolls across the hard-tiled floor. Meanwhile, a taller man from behind (Chou Yu-Jui 周堉睿, also a TNUA dance alumnus, but of Han Chinese descent) grabs Aulu from the back, and wrestles him, even covering Aulu's mouth and holding him down, as if conducting a violent maneuver. As the audience sitting very close to the performers clearly hear Aulu grasping for breath, and struggling to release himself, a sense of unease begins to rise, at least for myself. I felt like rushing to the center to free Aulu from the bullying of his peer. In a way, Bula is metaphorically choreographing the scene of the violence. I interpret this choreography as Bula's reference to how the settler colonialists have deprived the indigenous peoples of their natural resources—i.e., how the former indigenous cosmology of being part of nature through hunting has been replaced by the Han Chinese values and

⁹ From the e-program of *LUNA*, other Bunun songs listed include: the *Manantu* song (首祭歌 to pay tribute to the hunted enemy heads), the (飲酒歌 drinking song), and *Mudaning Kata* (歸途 a song sung when returning back home), etc.

agricultural ways of living.¹⁰ This is Bula's frequent strategy to awaken the kinesthetic empathy of the spectators in front of the performers, as I myself deeply experienced that afternoon.

But from a performative analysis, such sudden emotional transition, ranging from a previous calming sense of unison, to this instance of force and violence, is characteristic of Bula's works over the past few years. Professionally trained in the Tsoying High School dance program and later the dance department of the Taipei National University of the Arts, Bula had danced with Cloud Gate Dance Theatre, choreographed for the Cloud Gate 2, and even invited to create works for the Martha Graham Dance Company and the American Dance Festival. His choreographic strategy is often reminiscent of the German *tanztheatre* compositional structure for which Pina Bausch is known. For example, highly contrasting scenes would produce unexpected emotional swings for the audiences, leaving them at awe and in a state of perplexion/reflection at the same time. Relevant to this context of the "Indigenous Justice Classroom," is the direct analogy to the involuntary takeover and control by the various settler colonialists in the past few centuries who have possessed the traditional territories by force, leaving the indigenous people with no way to breathe and survive.

The next hunting scene is a central turning point in *LUNA*. A dancer Liay (Chinese name 朱雨航 Zhu Yu-hang) starts to talk about his

¹⁰ See Lorenzo Veracini's *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*. Palgrave Macmillan: 2010.

experience, going into the mountain with the tribal men.¹¹ In conversation with him is Kevan Tjuljapalas (Chinese name 許培根 Hsu Pei-gen), who first starts by asking how hunting is done, but then questions the need and the rationale to maintain such a tradition in the contemporary society, when “we can easily buy whatever kind of meat we want to consume in the local supermarkets such as *Quan-lien* (全聯, PXmart)” (extracted from their dialogue on stage). As their debate heats up, with Liay unable to get the upper hand, Kevan arrogantly concludes that the people who hunt nowadays are killing off all the endangered animals in the mountains, only to show off their masculinity! Such is the provocative statement that ended this scene.

Debates over indigenous hunting rights is a vexed topic. Liay tried to explain, but in vain, that hunting carries with it an indigenous wisdom and philosophy (i.e. the “local knowledge” as mentioned by Cruikshank), not to mention the respect for nature. It trains a man to observe his surroundings and hone his survival skills. Even when a wild boar or a mountain deer is killed for food, the hunter must first thank the sacrificed for feeding the tribe. A true hunter is knowledgeable of the traits of the other species, in order to anticipate their actions beforehand. Such

¹¹ The source of this hunting episode came from another BDC dancer Wang Jie 王傑 (Siyang Sawawan) of the Puyuma tribe from Taitung. It was first included in the Taipei performance in June 2018, and not the premiere in May in Taichung.

However, for this outdoor performance, Wang was not available, so Liay had to take on this role. Liay later shared his fear about this during the post-show talk, for he felt frustrated that he was unable to defend himself and the hunting tradition during the debate with Kevan on stage. This somewhat reflects the state of mind of indigenous hunters, who are forced to defend their tradition in contemporary society, as they are becoming more and more marginalized.

emphasis on indigenous values, as well as local knowledge and wisdom, definitely leaves a strong impact in the minds of the audiences.

Indigenous writer and filmmaker Ahronglong Sakinu (亞榮隆·撒可努), known for his book *The Sage Hunter*, retells the story of his father — “the last hunter”. He wrote: “The loneliness and solitude of the hunter, is the main source of his spirit and strength. Son, if you want to learn how to be a good hunter, you need to learn about the patience of ‘waiting’.”¹² With a master’s degree in ecology, Sakinu now runs his own Hunter School, training people to go into the mountain, and be at one with nature.¹³ Through such indigenous advocates of the traditional knowledge, the public’s general understanding of indigenous hunting rights is gradually gaining wider acceptance.

In terms of the arts, dance is also an effective way to create change. Jacqueline Shea Murphy, in her book on Native American Modern Dance histories, interviewed Native American dance artist Daystar, who emphasizes the impact of live theatre on audiences, especially regarding history, and other values and ways of life. Daystar said:

*You can read a lot about documents about history, but it
doesn't really have the impact that the theater has because it*

¹² My translation from the Chinese. See Sakinu’s book *The Sage Hunter* 《山豬 飛鼠 撒可努》 (literally translated as: “Mountain Boar, Flying Squirrel, Sakinu”), revised edition, Taipei: Yelu Books (耶魯國際文化事業有限公司) 2017, p. 31.

¹³ Lynn Su (English translation by Phil Newell), “Sakinu’s Hunter School: Contributing the Wisdom of Taiwan’s Indigenous Peoples,” in *Taiwan Panorama* (July, 2018)
<https://www.taiwan-panorama.com/en/Articles/Details?Guid=0d9dde7f-1e43-45f9-a05f-efba9c3fc43f&CatId=3>

[theater] is a vicarious experience. You are inviting the audience to experience it with you. You experience it with the spirit as well as the intellect.¹⁴

After the hunting debate scene in *LUNA*, another climax builds up. Individual dancers, starting with Kevan (aka “Bacon”) showcases his best physical attribute, then other solos follow. For example, a performer could be dancing fluidly across the stage in a free improvisational manner, or performing balancing acts on one leg, or even running with the speed of light, like an athlete around the stage. They perform these tasks with confidence and utmost macho spirit, while chanting “*Dastaluma*” and “*Wa-Ho-Ho...*”. In this noteworthy scene, these young men altered the content of traditional values of masculinity with their personal achievements in contemporary society. Instead of exhibiting the animals hunted from the forest as in the former days, they are telling individual success moments and other matters of pride, such as overcoming inner fear, or supporting their family’s livelihood. It is with the consent of the Bunun elders that Bula and his dancers are contemporizing old traditions to reflect the current situations of these youths.

Following such an uplifting sequence, we hear the comforting voice of Dudu coming from the far back “tepee,” leading the group back into a harmonious polyphonic chorus. Eventually, they meander around the stage in unison steps and even go behind the tall structure (symbolizing “home”)

¹⁴ Daystar quoted in Shea Murphy, p.20.

in a linear fashion, before finally entering it. The strong and calming singing brought the audience to an elevated spiritual ending.

The Road Ahead?

Unlike Bula's other works, in which dancers present their own individual personalities casually on stage, poking fun at their own stereotyped jokes, the opening of *LUNA* sets a solemn atmosphere. In the indoor theatre version, BDC's technical director Lee Chien-chang (李建常) darkens the whole space to set the atmosphere for the dim lights shining from the workers' helmets worn by the dancers, like coal miners crawling their way through a low cave. In other words, *LUNA* is a dignified piece, with the soothing voices at the beginning and end, signifying the entering and exiting from the mountains. In contrast, the scenes with the climatic hunting discussion and the showing off of one's achievements provide a much-needed boost of confidence to not only the indigenous dancers, but also for the audiences.

At a time of crisis—political, economic, cultural, and environmental—perhaps the best possible solution is to look back to nature, and our relationship to it. As then BDC Foundation director and former BDC dancer Lin Ding (林定) spoke at the 17th Taishin Award ceremony [when receiving the grand prize for *LUNA* in May 2019], “it is more the culture

of Taitung, [which I interpret to include its ecology] that is the base for BDC to continue growing.”¹⁵

This reminds me of French theorist Jacques Derrida's notion of “ontology,” which I find parallel to the wisdom of the indigenous philosophical world view. According to Athena Athanasiou's conversation with Judith Butler on dispossession, she links Derrida's “ontological value of being to a certain determined *topos*, locality or territory,” to track “the ways in which dispossession carries within it regulatory practices related to the conditions of situatedness, displacement, and emplacement, practices that produce and constrain human intelligibility.”¹⁶ To clarify, Derrida wrote: “By *ontology* we mean an axiomatics linking indissociably the ontological value of present-being [on] to its *situation*, to the stable and presentable determination of a locality, the *topos* of territory, native soil, city, body in general (italics in the original).”¹⁷ I believe such importance of ontology, the calling of the situated ecology of Taitung county—with the high peaks of the Central Mountain ridge and the vast shores of the Pacific Ocean—is one of the main reasons why Bula chose to return home to establish his dance company. The atmosphere from the mountains and ocean of this locality enabled the transition to a different rhythm and

¹⁵ My English translation from the video coverage of the Taishin Art Award ceremony, <https://artemperor.tw/focus/2699>, accessed 7 Aug 2019. In fact, Lin Ding himself is also an amateur botanist, sharing his local knowledge of the indigenous plants from Taitung with us when we visited.

¹⁶ Jacques Derrida's ontology concept from his book *Specters of Marx* is mentioned in Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou's *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political*. Cambridge, U.K.: Polity Press, 2013, p.18.

¹⁷ Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, pp. 102-103.

mentality, transforming not only the bodies of his dancers, but also the content and structure of his choreographies.

Taiwanese dance scholar Chen Ya-ping uses the term “spectral absence” of the indigenous dance rituals since the Japanese and the Han Chinese colonizers took over Taiwan in the past century or more, to refer to what has been erased or replaced in our indigenous dance trajectory.¹⁸ With such a history of erasure, and the ideological transformation of the nation-state’s strategies on indigenous dance, not to mention the commercial impact of tourism, the corporeal presence of indigenous bodies (such as Bula’s dancers to demarcate their traditional geographical and cultural territories) is of utmost urgency and importance.

Echoing Sakinu’s father’s reminder of the importance of the “patience of waiting” for the lone hunter, this training of patience is also crucial for the indigenous artist-activists, whose path toward reclaiming their own agency and, their traditional territorial justice, is yet to be continued...one precarious step at a time.

¹⁸ Chen Ya-ping (陳雅萍). “Regarding Traditional Territory and also History Dispossessed: Bodily Performances of Bulareyaung Dance Company and Questions Raised for the Theatre” (是傳統領域，也是被剝奪的歷史：布拉瑞揚舞團的劇場提問與身體展演), *PAR Performing Arts Review* monthly #311 (2018/11), P. 130.

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