

FOLK DANCING IN TAIWAN

Having heard that folk dancing was popular in Taiwan, I decided to contact the Chairman of the Taiwan International Folkdance Association, Hsu Wen Hung (Vincent), on the advice of Tineke van Geel, when planning our trip to Taiwan. Vincent kindly provided me with four options, including his local group at Yilan about an hour's drive from Taipei. It is an interesting drive



from Taipei travelling along one of Taiwan's longest road tunnels more than 12km. The Yilan IFD Association was quite a small group, dancing in the open air with a fan to keep dancers cool. As a thank you, I presented Vincent with a DVD & CD of one of Yorgo's Canberra workshops which he appreciated. Taiwan has 3-4 workshops each year conducted by visiting OS teachers. The most recent teacher came from Turkey. Dance camps are also held regularly.

I also visited another one of Vincent's options, twice as it was so much fun: the Fon-Tsia Folk Dance Club. They were a larger group, lively and very welcoming making a big effort to speak to me in English. They were also very good dancers! Most surprising was the number of men ... just as many as the women. Consequently, they danced quite a few couple dances; European, Israeli and South American during the two nights I was there. The club ran their evening differently to our classes. From 7pm to 8pm, members of the club led a variety of dances (ie no teaching). This was followed by about half an hour's teaching of one dance. During the first visit I learnt a hip hop dance to a hugely popular Chinese song ... apparently. During my second visit, two weeks later, we learnt a Bulgarian dance.



At the end of the teaching (both times) a photo was taken of the group. Dancing then continued until 10pm (same as first hour). I have uploaded videos of their dancing on FDC's facebook member's page so please take a look.

Also for your enjoyment, I have added to our facebook page a video of the Indigenous dance group, XunWu Dance Troupe, which performed in the foyer of the Hotel Royal Chipen, Taitung County, where I stayed one night. The troupe was so lively, colourful and entertaining! The audience joined in their last dance, a simple grapevine in a basket hold ... interesting as



it was so familiar. Taiwanese Aborigines are Austronesian peoples and were isolated for 5,500 years until mainland Chinese migrated to the island in the 17th century. I also visited an Aboriginal cultural village during my stay and saw more dancing that showcased all the different aboriginal clans living on this amazing tropical mountainous island.

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