

# **BELLY DANCE AND GLOCALISATION: CONSTRUCTING GENDER IN EGYPT AND ON THE GLOBAL STAGE**

Submitted by Caitlin McDonald to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Arab and Islamic Studies, April 2010.

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## **Abstract**

This thesis is an ethnography of the global belly dance community with particular reference to the transmission of dance paradigms from Cairo to the international dance community. Key words describing my topic include dance, gender, performance, group dynamics, social norms and resistance, public vs. private, tourism, and globalisation. I hypothesize that social dancing is used in many parts of the world as a space outside ordinary life in which to demonstrate compliance with or to challenge prevailing social paradigms. The examination of dance as a globalised unit of cultural capital is an emerging field. With this in mind I investigate the way this dance is employed in professional, semi-professional, and non-professional settings in Egypt and in other parts of the world, notably North America and Europe. Techniques included interviewing members of the international dance community who engage in dance tourism, travelling from their homes to Egypt or other destinations in order to take dance classes, get costumes, or in other ways seek to have an 'authentic' dance experience. I also explored connections dancers fostered with other members of the dance community both locally and in geographically distant locations by using online blogs, websites, listservs and social networking sites. I conducted the first part of my fieldwork in Cairo following this with fieldwork in belly dance communities in the United States and Britain.

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