

Manifestation of Lingnan Folk Dance Culture within Dance Compositions

Jie Zhou

Cinematography Institute, Ulaanbaatar, 11000, Mongolia

Abstract: Lingnan folk dance, the traditional dance art form of the Lingnan of China, encapsulates the humanistic sentiment of the area. Various types of Lingnan folk dances reflect the simple and hardworking life attitude of the laboring populace in the Lingnan. The Lingnan of China is characterized by its rich folk cultural diversity, resulting in unique Lingnan dance styles under the influence of different folk cultures. The varied and dynamic variations of the typical Lingnan folk dance styles can be categorized into examples like Lingnan opera folk dance and lifestyle folk dance. Impacted by the multi-ethnic culture and social consciousness of the Lingnan, folk dances primarily express ethnic sentiment within dance compositions. The use of dance as a medium accomplishes the transmission of folk dance art, exemplifying folk culture in the process of this conveyance. As a means of cultural inheritance in the Guangdong and Guangxi, the elements of daily life should be emphasized within dance compositions of Lingnan folk dance, along with the aesthetic representation of dance. This thesis will summarize the content and artistic connotations of Lingnan folk dance and will further delve into the manifestation forms of folk dance culture.

Keywords: Lingnan Folk Dance; Dance Culture; Dance Compositions; Manifestation Forms.

1. Introduction

Cultural heritage and the corresponding modes of transmission vary across different regions. For instance, in the Lingnan of China, the spirit of local culture permeates the Lingnan folk dances. The artistic depiction of Lingnan folk dance within compositions serves as an effective conduit for transmitting the spirit of Lingnan culture. As a multi-ethnic nation, China sees regional differences in folk dances, each of which embodies unique styles in their performance forms. In the Lingnan, folk dances emphasize seasonal festivals and customary practices. During the choreography process of the dance pieces, the essence of Lingnan is imbued therein. Given the ethnic complexity in the Lingnan, the folk dances can be further subdivided into Guangfu ethnic dance, Hakka ethnic dance, and Chaoshan ethnic dance. Taking Hakka dance as an example, its depiction in dance pieces often showcases the life sentiment and aspirations of the Hakka people. The form of Hakka dance is diverse, utilizing various dance movements to exhibit the three excellences of Hakka dance, allowing the folk dance culture to be vividly embodied in the work.

2. Overview of Lingnan Folk Dance

Lingnan folk dance can be classified into different dance forms based on the geographical location and culture of the Lingnan. As a cultural manifestation, the development and inheritance of Lingnan folk dance hold significant meaning. Since ancient times, the Lingnan in China has been a melting pot of various ethnic cultures, gradually giving rise to new dance forms in the process of cultural fusion. The dance compositions predominantly reflect the gentle sentiments associated with Guangfu as a water town, and the expressive forms of classical Chinese dance culture. In the current stage, Lingnan dance can be divided into two major modules based on cultural inheritance: folk dance and innovative dance. Among these, folk dance is more capable of embodying the sentiments of the people in the Lingnan during its performance, marking it as a distinctive local ecological

ethnic dance. According to the expressive forms of Lingnan folk dance, it can be classified into four types: 1. The first type echoes the local living atmosphere and the dances of laboring people during busy farming periods. 2. The second type reveres spirit, with dances that simulate totem worship. 3. The third type includes dances adapted from historical legends and folk stories. 4. The fourth type fuses dance and martial arts, promoting the martial spirit of the Guangfu through dance.

3. Artistic Connotation of Lingnan Folk Dance

3.1. Anthropomorphism in Lingnan Folk Dance

The anthropomorphic trait in Lingnan folk dance typically manifests in the expressive forms of dance, characterizing the performance and ensuring the dance's artistic connotation. Such anthropomorphism can be observed in most Lingnan folk dances. Taking the lion and dragon dances from the Guangfu as examples, the detailing of movements in lion dance enriches its minutiae. By utilizing the lion's blinking, the dance's emotions are conveyed, highlighting people's aspiration for a better life. The Hakka folk dance, "Cup Flower Dance," now a recognized intangible cultural heritage of Guangdong Province, is adapted from traditional Daoist dance. It infuses the spirit of Lingnan into the dance pieces, employing cross-dressing and the performance form of lateral kneeling steps, thus completing the anthropomorphic expression of dance.

3.2. Color and Aesthetics in Lingnan Dance

The artistic connotation of dance is often reflected in the color of dance costumes. Different folk dances use color variances to convey aesthetic values during artistic expression. For instance, in the Guangfu Lion Dance, the lion dance props are usually composed of red and yellow colors. Red, representing festive colors since ancient times, conveys the dance's pursuit of a beautiful life through the red lion dance props. Yellow, being brighter, lends vivid color to the dancer's

props, enhancing the artistic connotation.

4. Manifestation of Lingnan Folk Dance Culture in Works

4.1. Enhancing Dance Rhythm by Integrating Elements of Life

It is crucial for Lingnan folk dance culture to incorporate elements of life into choreography, thereby elevating the rhythmic quality of the dance. Rhythmic motion, being a vital expressive form of dance, should be emphasized in the performance of Lingnan folk dances. Attention should be given to the coordination of movements and limbs in dance works, both of which synergistically contribute to the characteristic expression of Lingnan folk dances. The foundational form of dance rhythm is the sense of dance tempo. Dancers, through their personal understanding of dance, infuse elements of life during the performance, thereby realizing the rhythmic presentation of Lingnan folk dance. If folk culture aims to be embodied in dance works, the process of choreography should also pay attention to cultural transmission. Choreographers should gain a comprehensive understanding of Lingnan culture prior to choreographing, such as Guangfu, Hakka, and Chaoshan culture, among others. Dance movements should be adjusted according to different Lingnan cultures during the choreographic process. Taking Lingnan's Chaoshan Qianggu Dance as an example, this dance is a Han Chinese folk dance from Guangdong and is performed by theatrical troupes in the Chaoshan. To enhance the manifestation of folk dance culture in works, a secondary creation of the Qianggu Dance could be pursued. The performance history of the Qianggu Dance can be traced back to the end of the Ming Dynasty. Adapting the dance forms from this era, the duet performance is re-choreographed into a group dance. In the choreographic process, elements of life from the Chaoshan are infused into the dance movements, thereby maintaining the rhythmic quality of the Qianggu Dance. For the performance of the re-created group Qianggu Dance, emphasis is placed on the body's circular movements, completing the circular motions, and capturing the rhythm of dance to manifest culture.

4.2. Body Language Manifesting the Soul of Folk Dance

Employing body language during the dance process constitutes a manifestation of the folk dance culture. The spirit and soul of dance are integrated into the dancer's body language, thereby achieving the representation of Lingnan culture. Some forms of Lingnan folk dance pertain to ritual dances, as traditional folk dances are often associated with families and religious nature. For instance, dances performed during ancestral worship ceremonies in ancestral halls largely embody a feeling of tribute and remembrance for ancestors. The ritual dances of the farming era mostly reflect the sacrificial culture of the Lingnan. Attention should be given to the manifestation of Lingnan ritual folk culture in these types of dances. Dancers utilize their body language and dance movements to perform ritual dances. In the process of performing, they incorporate their understanding of Lingnan ritual culture, accomplishing the representation of folk dance culture. Take, for example, the Unicorn Dance from Foshan, Guangdong. Its development even was a court dance in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, and it initially evolved into Unicorn martial arts. The Unicorn, a mythical creature in

Chinese traditional culture, symbolizes people's longing for a better life. The performance of the Unicorn Dance requires two performers, whose body language embodies the inheritance of Foshan culture in the Unicorn Dance. The two dancers respectively perform the head and tail of the Unicorn. Through coordinated dance movements, they depict the posture of the mythical Unicorn, thereby expressing people's wishes through dance performance. The Unicorn Dance, being a well-preserved Lingnan dance at this stage, integrates artistry and culture. Dancers achieve the representation of Lingnan folk dance culture through body language. The Drunken Dragon Dance, widely circulated in Zhongshan City, Guangdong, is a representative work of Lingnan folk dance. The Drunken Dragon Dance originated in the Tang and Song dynasties and flourished towards the end of the Ming Dynasty. Due to its cultural inheritance from Lingnan, current performers emphasize the performance of this dance. Modern Drunken Dragon Dance uses dance props to fulfill the sacrificial role of the dance. Performers employ body language during the Drunken Dragon performance to accomplish worship and dragon dance content, thereby realizing the embodiment of folk sacrificial culture in dance works.

4.3. Dance Form Emphasizing Aesthetic Representation

The Cantonese folk culture influences the representation of Lingnan dance, which, unlike the ritual dances of the Chaoshan, are more about cultural inheritance. Influenced by Cantonese culture, Cantonese dance is more often seen in terms of local customs and practices, displayed through the performers. For example, choreography set to the music of "Rain hitting banana leaves," one of the most widespread Lingnan melodies in China, is notable for its beautiful and smooth tune. Utilizing the melodious tune of this music for dance creation can ensure the embodiment of folk dance culture in the work. In the process of creating the dance of "Rain hitting banana leaves," elements of aestheticism can be integrated, such as the effects of costumes. Combining the gentle image of Lingnan women with the musical performance can enhance the cultural atmosphere of the dance. Performers use banana leaves as a representation of their outerwear during the performance. They design unique movements with the banana leaves to achieve beautiful dance movements. In this process, Cantonese culture is integrated, completing the representation of the dance form. In contrast to the Cantonese culture, the Hakka culture, with its dance expressions, places more emphasis on the hardworking and simple representation of the Hakka people. For example, in the Hakka dances of the Walled Village and Women, performers display the three most important stages of a woman's life—marriage, middle age, and old age—through dance performances, thereby realizing the embodiment of Hakka culture.

5. Conclusion

The embodiment of Lingnan folk dance culture in dance works should first value the artistic connotation of Lingnan folk dance, deeply understand the anthropomorphism and color aesthetics of Lingnan dance, and realize the sublimation of culture in the form of dance works. By using forms such as permeating life elements to enhance dance rhythm, body language to embody the soul of folk dance, and dance form to

emphasize aesthetic representation, we can realize the embodiment of Lingnan folk dance culture in dance works and inherit Lingnan folk culture. Since ancient times, China's Lingnan has been an area of cultural integration of multiple ethnic groups. New dance forms have gradually emerged in the process of different ethnic cultural integration. Lingnan folk dance, as a way of inheriting the culture of the Guangdong and Guangxi, should value the integration of life elements and the aesthetic representation of folk customs in dance works.

References

- [1] Hu Xiao. The Concept Guidance of Lingnan Dance Creation in the Context of "Regional Culture": Thoughts on the "Lingnan Dance Choreographer Training Project" of National Art Foundation [J]. Journal of Beijing Dance Academy, 2020 (05): 109-114.
- [2] Wang Yibo. Research on the Relationship and Development of Regional Culture and "Lingnan Dance" [J]. Artists of China, 2018 (07):147.
- [3] Ding Ran. The Embodiment of Lingnan Folk Dance Culture in Dance Works [A]. Guangdong Folk Culture Research Committee. Proceedings of December 2015 (2nd half) Folk Heritage Seminar [C]. Guangdong Folk Culture Research Committee: Guangdong Folk Culture Research Committee, 2015:4.
- [4] Huang Guanglin. Application of Modern Technology in the Study of Folk Dance Culture - Exemplified by Application in the Study of Lingnan Folk Dance [A]. Proceedings of December 2015 (2nd half) Folk Heritage Seminar [C]. Guangdong Folk Culture Research Committee: Guangdong Folk Culture Research Committee, 2015:4.