

Innovation and Development of Intangible Cultural Heritage Dance in Western Guangdong in Modern Society

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ABSTRACT

The intangible cultural heritage dance of western Guangdong is an important part of the traditional culture in the western Guangdong region, with a profound historical background and unique artistic charm. However, with the advancement of the modernization process, intangible cultural heritage dances are facing severe challenges. This article sorts out the origin, history and current situation of intangible cultural heritage dances in western Guangdong, and sorts out the development process of intangible cultural heritage dances in western Guangdong in different periods of the multicultural circle, including the development process of "prosperity, change, recovery and danger" from the Pre-Qin period to the present. And under the impact of modern technology and multiculturalism, it still faces problems such as talents, funds, venues, audiences and aesthetics, and can only rely on policy support for cultural protection and artistic innovation; From the perspectives of cultural protection and artistic inheritance, modern means and forms are utilized to enhance its appeal and dissemination power, so as to achieve an organic combination of tradition and modern innovation.

KEYWORDS

Western Guangdong; Intangible cultural heritage dance; Folk dance; Innovation and development; Modern society

1 Introduction

As one of the important cultural branches of Lingnan culture, the western part of Guangdong Province is rich in unique intangible cultural heritage (hereinafter referred to as intangible cultural heritage). Its folk traditional dances, such as the Nuo dance in Zhanjiang, the Helou Dance in Yangjiang, and the Pi Xiu Dance in Wuchuan, are not only the living carriers of regional culture but also vivid microcosm of the local excellent traditional culture. These dance forms are rooted in agricultural civilization and folk beliefs. They tell stories through body language, musical rhythms and sacrificial ceremonies, condensing the ethnic memory and spiritual identity. However, under the impact of globalization and modernization, the survival space of traditional intangible cultural heritage dances is facing severe challenges. Problems such as the lack of inheritors, the disappearance of ritual scenes, and the lack of attention from the younger generation have gradually put them in a life-and-death situation. Some intangible cultural heritage dances are on the verge of disappearance. Therefore, the work of their exploration, protection and development is extremely urgent. Under such circumstances, the School of Music and Dance of Guangdong Business and Technology, as an important research base for the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage dance in western Guangdong, has been conducting in-depth exploration and field investigations since 2023, collecting a large amount of precious materials. This article takes the intangible cultural heritage dance of western Guangdong as the research object and conducts an in-depth analysis of its development trend from the perspective of historical development, hoping to create a new situation for the development of intangible cultural heritage dance in the western Guangdong region in modern society^[1]. This will provide theoretical references and practical inspirations for the development of local intangible cultural heritage dances in modern society, and at the same time contribute a modest effort to the revitalization of the regional cultural ecology and the inheritance of art in Guangdong.

2 The origin of intangible cultural heritage dance in western Guangdong

In ancient times, western Guangdong was part of the Baiyue region, where people lived by fishing, hunting and gathering. They revered the worship of natural deities and gave birth to the rudimentary form of primitive dances. The ancient Yue people believed in ghosts and worshipped witchcraft. In the early days, their dances were mostly used for sacrificial purposes to drive away epidemics. For instance, the Nuo dance involved wearing wooden masks and holding ritual implements to dance, imitating the movements of birds and beasts, symbolizing communication with deities and praying for favorable weather. During the late Qin and Han dynasties, immigrants from the Central Plains moved southward to the western part of Guangdong Province, bringing agricultural techniques and the culture of rites and music. These elements merged with the local culture to give rise to new forms. Gaoliang Prefecture (now Maoming and Yangjiang) was an ancient military stronghold. When soldiers were defending the border, they combined the martial arts dance of the Central Plains with the battle rituals of the Yue people. The Wuchuan dance Pixiu integrated martial arts and

acrobatics, creating the dance of the Wandering gods. In the western part of Guangdong Province, with mountains at its back and the sea in front, fishing, animal husbandry, rice cultivation and mountainous areas coexist. The "Tiao Peng Dance" that has been passed down since the Qing Dynasty recreates the scene of a bountiful harvest in farming. Historically, the western part of Guangdong Province was a place where multiple ethnic groups such as the Yao, Zhuang and Han lived together. It was the cultural integration of these ethnic groups that gave rise to unique dance forms.

The formation of intangible cultural heritage dances in western Guangdong is based on the ancient Yue witch ritual, and is the result of the infiltration of Central Plains culture, the integration of fishery, animal husbandry and farming culture, and the cultures of multiple ethnic groups. From movements, music to props and dance routines, the evolution embodies the people of western Guangdong's reverence for nature, their remembrance of history, and their recognition and commitment to their ethnic identity. These dance forms are the living reproduction of the regional culture of Western Guangdong.

3 The historical development of intangible cultural heritage dances in western Guangdong

3.1 The Pre-Qin and Qin-Han periods

Dance in the Pre-Qin period was rooted in witchcraft consciousness such as totem worship and worship of gods and ghosts, and was an artistic expression form for ancient people to explore the relationship between human beings and nature. During the Zhou Dynasty, Nuo dance was incorporated into the category of "ritual" in the national institutional system, becoming a sacrificial activity of significant political importance and forming a fixed and standardized content. During the Qin and Han dynasties, the scale and rituals of Nuo dance were expanded. Nuo dance in the western part of Guangdong Province began to gradually take shape and develop during this period. Due to the prosperity of politics, economy and culture, the content, lineup and types of Nuo dance have been further developed.

3.2 Tang and Song dynasties - Ming and Qing dynasties

During this period, Nuo dance evolved from an initial sacrificial activity into a form of cultural and artistic performance, and continuously expanded to ethnic minority areas, integrating with local folk customs and religions, enriching the expression forms and contents of Nuo dance. During the Sui and Tang Dynasties, there were various types of Nuo dance, such as national Nuo, temple Nuo, folk Nuo, military Nuo, and rural Nuo. Nuo dance developed from the imperial court into an important sacrificial activity at the prefectural and county levels, and shifted from entertaining deities to entertaining people. During the Northern and Southern Song Dynasties, the main characters of the grand Nuo ritual in the imperial court had changed from Fang Xiangshi, the protagonist of the Nuo ritual in the Zhou Dynasty, to folk legends of deities, Buddhas, Taoists and immortals. The development of opera art during the Song and Yuan Dynasties also accelerated the changes in the Nuo dance ceremony, promoting its development towards secularization and entertainment. During the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, the culture of carrying pavilion brought by immigrants from southern Fujian merged and evolved with Nuo Dance. The "Jumping rice Pavilion" and "Jumping Flower Pavilion" began to spread and thrive during the Qing Dynasty. During the long-term process of ethnic integration and development, the local culture of the western Guangdong region gradually combined with the Central Plains culture and Wu-Yue culture, forming a unique regional culture of western Guangdong.

3.3 From the late Qing dynasty to before the reform and opening up

The dance activities Before the reform and opening up not only continued the folk traditions since the Ming and Qing dynasties, but also were influenced by social changes, the New Culture Movement and the sprouts of modernization, forming a historical node that Bridges the past and the future. Before the reform and opening up, Nuo dance showed a tendency towards de-witchcraft. The dance formation was simplified from the "Five Directions Evil" to the "Three Talents Formation", reflecting modern rational concepts. During the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, the Wuchuan PI Xiu Dance was adapted into a workers' and peasants' alliance dance, changing the "PI Xiu spitting out Symbols" movement to the "intersecting sickle and hammer" form, achieving the integration of folk art and revolutionary ideology. Therefore, the complex aspects reflected by the folk dances in western Guangdong during this period under the multiple effects of the loosening of clan ethics and the surging revolutionary waves, these changes are also precious historical fragments of the modernization process of Chinese folk art.

3.4 Since the reform and opening up

Since the 20th century, the government has introduced a series of policies to enhance the protection of folk dance

culture. The folk dances in the western part of Guangdong Province have undergone a complex process from recovery to protection amid the interweaving of policy support, cultural awareness and the modernization process. The national intangible cultural heritage protection system provides institutional guarantees for dances such as Nuo Dance and Qilin Dance in western Guangdong. Some clans have revised their clan regulations to allow women to participate. The protection of intangible cultural heritage dances should be strengthened in all aspects, including national policy support and the reform of inheritance models. However, with the rapid development of network technology and the changes in people's lifestyles, traditional folk dances are gradually facing the crises of lack of successors, discontinuity and loss.

4 Problems faced by intangible cultural heritage dances in western Guangdong in modern social development

4.1 The shortage of both talents and funds

With the rapid development of modern technological lifestyles, many young people lack interest in traditional folk dances and are more inclined to pursue popular culture. Most young people in rural areas go out to work, which also leads to a lack of strength in the team of inheritors of intangible cultural heritage dances. The number of young people who originally participated in the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage dance has been decreasing year by year, and the older generation of artists are getting old, resulting in a phenomenon of talent gap in the inheritance. At the same time, the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage dances also requires financial support, including venue rental, prop production, and the training of inheritors. At present, the sources of funds for the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage dance in the western part of Guangdong Province mainly rely on a small amount of government subsidies and self-raised funds from the private sector, resulting in a significant funding gap. Due to a shortage of funds, some cultural institutions and art groups find it difficult to organize more rehearsals and performances, which has affected the inheritance effect of intangible cultural heritage dances.

4.2 The weakening of protection awareness and the shift of technological aesthetics

With the development of digital technology, modern entertainment methods such as video games and short videos have brought about brand-new experiences. These emerging entertainment visual effects and interactive experiences have attracted a large number of young people. Meanwhile, in the context of globalized multiculturalism, Western popular culture has had a certain influence on the aesthetic concepts of regional people. Young people blindly pursue Western dance styles such as street dance and jazz dance, and their interest in traditional dances is gradually decreasing. They think they are not trendy enough, which in turn weakens the cultural heritage of intangible cultural heritage dances in western Guangdong. The younger generation has insufficient understanding of the cultural value of intangible cultural heritage dance and lacks cultural identity. In this situation, traditional folk dances are difficult to meet the aesthetic demands of young people for novelty and excitement, resulting in a small group of young audiences. Therefore, how to attract the young group through technological innovation is a problem that we urgently need to think about.

4.3 The reduction of the inheritance field and the singleness of the dissemination channels

With the acceleration of urbanization, traditional cultural Spaces have been squeezed, and the performance venues and inheritance environment of intangible cultural heritage dances have been damaged. During the process of urbanization, the construction of cultural facilities related to intangible cultural heritage dances lags behind and is difficult to meet the development needs of modern society, resulting in a further reduction of the inheritance field. For instance, the traditional temple fair venue in western Guangdong has been converted into commercial land, causing the intangible cultural heritage dances originally performed at the temple fair to lose their display platform. Meanwhile, the digital protection and dissemination of intangible cultural heritage dances in western Guangdong have lagged behind, failing to fully leverage the expanded influence of modern technological media such as the Internet and new media. The traditional and single approach is difficult to attract the attention and participation of young people.

5 Suggestions for the innovative development of intangible cultural heritage dances in western Guangdong in modern society

5.1 Cultural protection

5.1.1 Digital protection

- (1) Establish a digital resource library

By leveraging digital technology, a comprehensive record and organization of intangible cultural heritage dances in western Guangdong are carried out. By means of high-definition video shooting, motion capture and other methods, the movements, rhythms, music of the dance and related historical and cultural background materials are collected, and a dedicated digital resource library is established. By organizing professional teams to go deep into various counties and cities in the western part of Guangdong Province, they recorded the intangible cultural heritage dance movements and paintings of the western part of Guangdong, meticulously documenting the dance movements and musical rhythms, as well as the cultural contents such as legends and rituals told orally by the inheritors. Classify and store these materials in the digital resource library for convenient access and research at any time, providing a solid data foundation for the inheritance and development of intangible cultural heritage dances in western Guangdong.

(2) New media communication and promotion

By leveraging the Internet platform, expand the dissemination scope of intangible cultural heritage dances in western Guangdong. By setting up an official website, social media accounts and other means, regularly release videos, pictures, text introductions and other content about intangible cultural heritage dances to attract more people's attention. Create interesting and vivid short videos on short-video platforms to showcase the unique charm of intangible cultural heritage dances in western Guangdong, which will attract likes, comments and shares from netizens. In collaboration with online education platforms, we have launched online teaching of intangible cultural heritage dances in western Guangdong, enabling more people to learn these dances without leaving their homes and enhancing their social attention and influence.

5.1.2 Improve the protection mechanism for intangible cultural heritage

The government has increased its support for the protection of intangible cultural heritage dances in western Guangdong by setting up special protection funds, which are used for the training of intangible cultural heritage dance inheritors, the construction and maintenance of dance performance venues, and the production of props and costumes, etc. Rewards and support should be given to individuals and groups that actively participate in the inheritance and development of intangible cultural heritage dance. Intangible cultural heritage dance inheritance awards should be established to commend and reward folk artists, cultural institutions, etc. that have performed outstandingly in the inheritance work, so as to enhance the enthusiasm of all sectors of society to participate in the protection of intangible cultural heritage dance. Improve relevant laws and regulations, strengthen the protection of intellectual property rights of intangible cultural heritage dances in western Guangdong, clarify the copyright ownership of intangible cultural heritage dances, and prevent others from arbitrarily tampering with or stealing intangible cultural heritage dance works. For acts that infringe upon the intellectual property rights of intangible cultural heritage dances, strict crackdowns will be carried out in accordance with the law to create a favorable legal environment for the inheritance and development of intangible cultural heritage dances in western Guangdong.

5.2 Artistic inheritance

5.2.1 Establish a course system for intangible cultural heritage dance

Incorporate the intangible cultural heritage dances of western Guangdong into the school education system and cultivate students' interest in intangible cultural heritage dances starting from the basic education stage. In the aesthetic education courses of primary and secondary schools, elements of intangible cultural heritage dances from western Guangdong should be appropriately integrated to enable students to understand the cultural value and artistic charm of intangible cultural heritage dances. Offer relevant professional courses in colleges and universities to cultivate professional talents in intangible cultural heritage dance. In the dance major, a direction of intangible cultural heritage dance is set up to systematically teach the historical origin, dance techniques, cultural connotations and other knowledge of intangible cultural heritage dance in western Guangdong, providing talent support for the inheritance and innovation of intangible cultural heritage dance. Cultural institutions have set up intangible cultural heritage dance training classes, encouraging social forces to participate in the training of intangible cultural heritage dances in western Guangdong. They recruit students from all walks of life and invite professional dance teachers and folk artists to give lectures. They adopt a teaching method that combines theory with practice, allowing students to learn dance skills while gaining a deep understanding of the cultural background of intangible cultural heritage dances. Enhance trainees' awareness of participating in the protection and inheritance of intangible cultural heritage dances.

5.2.2 Innovate performance forms

On the basis of preserving the core cultural connotations and traditional dance movements of the intangible cultural heritage dance in western Guangdong, the performance forms are innovated by integrating elements such as modern art,

music and drama. If the sacrificial dance of western Guangdong is combined with modern stage lighting design, a mysterious sacrificial atmosphere can be created through the changes of lighting. Incorporate modern electronic music elements into dance music to enhance the rhythm and appeal of the music. Drawing on the performance techniques of drama, endow the dance with a storyline to make the performance more vivid and interesting, and attract more audience attention. Strengthen the exchange and cooperation between intangible cultural heritage dances in western Guangdong and outstanding dances from other regions. Organize the intangible cultural heritage dance team of western Guangdong to participate in domestic and international dance competitions, cultural exchange activities, etc., and learn from and exchange experiences with dance teams from other regions. Meanwhile, outstanding dance teams from other regions are invited to western Guangdong for exchange performances, allowing the intangible cultural heritage dances of Western Guangdong to absorb the essence of dances from different regions and promote their own innovative development. Through cross-regional exchanges and cooperation, enhance the popularity and influence of intangible cultural heritage dances in western Guangdong both at home and abroad.

5.2.3 Integration of modern technology and art

By leveraging artificial intelligence-generated content (AIGC) technology, new ideas and methods are provided for the creation of intangible cultural heritage dances in western Guangdong. Through AI GC technology, dance movement sequences, musical melodies, etc. can be generated, providing inspiration for dance creators. By using dance movement generation software, by inputting the basic movement characteristics and creation requirements of intangible cultural heritage dances in western Guangdong, the software can generate a series of innovative dance movement combinations. On this basis, dance creators can screen and modify to create dance works with new ideas. Meanwhile, AIGC technology can also be applied to the creation of dance music. Based on the style and emotional needs of intangible cultural heritage dances, it can generate music that matches them, enriching the artistic expressiveness of the dances. By leveraging virtual reality (VR) technology, an immersive experience of intangible cultural heritage dance in western Guangdong is created for the audience. The VR dance experience project was developed. After the audience put on the VR device, they felt as if they were at the traditional festival site of the rural areas in western Guangdong, watching the performance of intangible cultural heritage dances up close and experiencing the charm of dance. Through VR technology, the audience can also participate in the dance performance, dancing along with the dancers, enhancing the audience's sense of participation and interactivity. In addition, VR technology can also be applied to the teaching of intangible cultural heritage dances. Through VR devices, students can learn dance movements more intuitively and improve their learning outcomes. Make full use of new media platforms such as Douyin and Bilibili to spread the intangible cultural heritage dances of western Guangdong. Beautifully produced short videos and live-streamed performances of intangible cultural heritage dances have attracted the attention of the younger generation. In the production of short videos, special effects, animation and other technical means are employed to creatively present intangible cultural heritage dances, enhancing the video's interest and appeal. Through the dissemination on new media platforms, the limitations of time and space are broken, enabling more people to understand and love the intangible cultural heritage dances of western Guangdong.

5.2.4 The development of folk activities

In traditional festival activities, the performance forms and contents of intangible cultural heritage dances in western Guangdong are innovated. In addition to retaining the traditional dance performance segments, interactive segments have been added to invite the audience to participate in the dance experience. At the festival and temple fair event site, booths for making intangible cultural heritage dance props are set up, where folk artists teach the audience on the spot how to make them, allowing the audience to experience the cultural charm of intangible cultural heritage firsthand. At the same time, by integrating modern technological means, the historical culture and videos of intangible cultural heritage dances were projected onto the screens at the event site, allowing the audience to have a deeper understanding of the cultural connotations and values of intangible cultural heritage dances. It is also possible to plan folk activities themed on intangible cultural heritage dances of western Guangdong, hold intangible cultural heritage dance culture festivals, folk dance competitions, etc., invite intangible cultural heritage dance teams and folk artists from all over the country to participate, and showcase intangible cultural heritage dances of different regions and types. The holding of the event promotes the exchange and interaction of intangible cultural heritage dance and drives the development of the local cultural and tourism industry.

6 Conclusion

As a treasure of local traditional culture, the intangible cultural heritage dance of western Guangdong carries rich historical, folk and spiritual values and is an important cultural heritage that cannot be ignored. However, in the face of

the pressure brought by modernization and globalization, traditional dance forms are encountering unprecedented challenges in the process of inheritance. The waning interest of the younger generation in traditional culture, the imperfect teaching and dissemination mechanism of traditional dance, and the lagging pace of modern innovation all pose difficulties for the sustainable development of intangible cultural heritage dance in western Guangdong. The protection and innovation of intangible cultural heritage dances in western Guangdong is not only the inheritance of traditional culture, but also an active exploration of the future development of culture. By integrating the demands and development trends of modern society, innovative approaches can bring new vitality to this traditional art form, enabling it to exert a more lasting and far-reaching influence in modern society. The sustainable development of intangible cultural heritage dance in western Guangdong requires the joint efforts of the whole society. Innovation and inheritance should be carried out on the basis of respecting tradition, so as to achieve the organic integration of tradition and modernity.

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