

An Analysis of the Religious Belief Characteristics of Southeast Asian Dance

Feirui Li

Guangxi University For Nationalities, Guangxi, Nanning, 530006, China

Keywords: Southeast asian dance, Religious beliefs, Thailand

Abstract: The dances in Southeast Asia are colorful and can be divided into four major dance systems: Buddhism, Puppet, Hinduism and Islam. The four major dance systems are influenced by India's two epics. In some Southeast Asian countries, such as Thailand and Vietnam, their religious culture is closely linked to dance arts. Strong religious culture permeates dance music, style and dance vocabulary. Based on the analysis of Southeast Asian dance art, this paper takes Thai dance art as an example to further elaborate its religious and cultural charm.

1. Introduction

Engels said that religion, like philosophy, is a “higher, i.e. more far from the material economic foundation of ideology” [1]. However, as an ideology, it not only experienced the process of development and processing, but also developed independently according to its own laws. Religious culture and dance culture. Asean art, as a new breakthrough in Chinese art research, is very research-oriented [2]. Southeast Asia is made up of Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Indonesia and other countries. Due to geographical and religious reasons, Southeast Asian countries represented by Indonesia, Thailand and Myanmar live alone in dance culture and are relatively developed [3]. Dances in Southeast Asia have strong religious color of Buddhism and Hinduism. As a result, the dance branches in Southeast Asia present four major dance departments, namely puppet dance department, Hindu dance department, Buddhist dance department and Islamic dance department. China and ASEAN countries have close economic exchanges. Some exchange performance activities and cultural expositions held have promoted the development of ASEAN art while spreading Chinese culture. The research on ASEAN music, dance, culture and religion is the focus of current research.

2. The Significance of Studying Southeast Asian Dance Art

Southeast Asian dance art has extremely strong religious characteristics. In Southeast Asian dance, it embodies significant religious culture. Its dance types mainly include palace dance, folk dance, sacrificial dance and religious dance. The dance works can all feel the strong Southeast Asian characteristics [4]. The cultural differences, geographical differences, customs differences, music differences and dance styles between Southeast Asian dances and European folk dances are very large. Judging from the influence of Indian religion on Southeast Asia, it seems to be very large [5]. However, it is not difficult for people to feel the different ethnic groups in southeast Asian countries if they carefully observe the specific manifestations of some cultures from a microscopic perspective. Compared with European folk dances, Southeast Asian dances have significant differences in music, customs and styles. Vietnam has been a secular country since modern times. On the whole, the role of religion in the whole country is restricted by politics. Myanmar is the representative country of the puppet dance department, Indonesia is the representative country of the Hindu dance department, Thailand is the representative country of the Buddhist dance department, and Brunei is the representative country of the Islamic dance department. However, at present, the research on ASEAN dance is relatively weak, and it is necessary to establish a database for the research on southeast Asian dance culture so as to further strengthen the research on its dance art.

3. The General Characteristics of Southeast Asian Dance

Life style determines artistic style. Southeast Asia is located in the tropics, with humid climate, rich vegetation and long-term stable and comfortable life of the people. Therefore, the overall characteristics of Southeast Asian dance show a self-sufficient life. Special geographical environment and historical changes gave birth to Vietnamese culture. The collision and exchange between the eastern and western cultures and the local culture have made the religious life of the whole Vietnamese people colorful. Each region's dance music, vocabulary, types and forms have their own unique forms of expression [6]. No matter the puppet dance department, the Hindu dance department, the Buddhist dance department or the Islamic dance department, they all show a state of contentment, no desire and no desire, as if they were quiet and profound as gods. In addition, due to the close geographical location and similar historical and cultural characteristics, Southeast Asian dances as a whole show the following characteristics in the selection of dance movements:

3.1 Strong Style

Dance scene selection and performance color is bright, incorporating a large number of totem worship and analogy movements; The origin of the puppet dance troupe is mainly influenced by puppet plays in India and China. The basic movements of the dance troupe are created according to the movements of the string-lifting puppets. Religious activities are unprecedented and even some new religious phenomena are emerging. Churches, temples and Taoist temples everywhere are popular, and weddings and funerals continue. Its religious culture is very rich. Myths and legends and folk stories are the main materials of dance, which reflect the culture, customs and traditional life of Thai people [7]. The shadow of religious culture can be found in almost every region of Thailand. Temples are an indispensable part of Thai people's life and the center of social and religious life. This kind of dance, which originates from agricultural and religious activities, has a broad mass base in the local community. Its enthusiastic and active performance makes people feel the same, and it is unconsciously brought into the atmosphere created by the dance to feel Myanmar's unique regional culture and the cultural charm of the mysterious nation. The posture of dancers is mainly in the form of semi-squatting, and the common gestures are to burn fingers or bend and stretch barefoot. Dance performances are mainly held in sacrificial activities, praying and vowing, and festivals.

3.2 The Modelling Pays Attention to the Performance Bright Life Condition

Emphasis on curve beauty, used to show emotion and connotation through hand movements; With the development of history and the progress of culture, religion has been introduced into Indonesia, Java and Bali, and many different types of dances have appeared, such as religious ritual dances. It comes from people's life, reflects people's real life, and is deeply loved by the broad masses of the people. Belief and religion are the spiritual requirements of some people. The right to freedom of belief to believe or not to believe in a certain religion is respected and guaranteed in a consistent manner, and the right to normal religious life in accordance with the law is realized. Religion plays a decisive role in the development of dance history in Indonesia. Islam is the largest religion after Buddhism and Hinduism. Dance in Indonesia is influenced by Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam and is widely inclusive. The dance retains the elements of Myanmar dance and Cambodia, mainly performing on grand festivals and Buddhist ceremonies. The eastern and central parts of Thailand are mainly folk dances, including farming dance, wedding dance and harvest dance. Therefore, Thais respect other people's religious beliefs very much and have special feelings for people who believe in Buddhism. People who are predestined friends with Buddhism are very happy to talk about their Buddhist thoughts and beliefs with tourists visiting Thailand.

3.3 The Surface of the Dance Has a Strong Flavor of Life and Regional Customs

However, the dress and details show strict divinity and Buddha nature. Southeast Asian dance generally presents a moderate style, which is different from the gentleness and changefulness of Chinese classical dance, as well as the strength and modernity of western dance. The lyrics are

mainly carols and show respect to the audience in the form of dance and movements. Therefore, we can say that Buddhism is the most influential religion in Vietnam, and even some people say that Buddhism is the state religion of Vietnam. Thailand is a typical multi-ethnic country in Southeast Asia. People from Thailand, Laos, Khmer, Malaysia and other countries and regions have gathered and settled in Thailand. Therefore, Thailand has gained many advantages in dance development and is good at singing and dancing. There are significant differences between palace dance and folk dance in Thai dance. 95% of Thais in Thailand believe in Mahayana Buddhism, which is the state religion of Thailand. Moreover, the Thai Constitution supports and protects the freedom of religious belief and has certain binding force on Buddhist believers [8]. In artistic form, art can only be fine. Like a well-made handicraft, every stitch will exhaust the craftsman's life's painstaking efforts. Many people think that Southeast Asian dance is just waving and walking slowly. In fact, it is not. Its kung fu is all in the body and mind. Southeast Asian dances create a sacred and solemn emotional world and religious beliefs through body expression and costumes. Respect for faith determines that the artistic spirit finally presents the aesthetic meaning of restraint and respect.

4. Religious Culture in Southeast Asian Dance

As a part of dance culture, religious dance organically combines religious art and dance art. Southeast Asian court dances stress elegant and smooth aesthetic implication, such as flowing artistic conception, graceful and graceful body appearance, but they are free and open in style without too many restrictions from court etiquette. In terms of cultural affiliation, the ultimate affiliation of dance should be cultural affiliation. Culture means “humanization”. Whether traditional or modern, the human mind is always the subject of artistic attention and expression. Today, religious culture is deeply embedded in Southeast Asian dance arts and performance works, specifically in the following aspects:

4.1 Unique Props

For example, Changjia dance, as an ancient palace dance often seen in northern Thailand, is popular in Chiang Mai. Its main feature is that dance performance has very special requirements for Taoism. It has a slow movement process and uses golden armour to shape the sculptural movements. Its performance is closely related to the Buddhist concept of Thailand. Performers wear long golden nails with their fingers and perform hand movements. The performance has certain technical skills. The movement process is relatively slow. The long golden nails are shaped into plastic movements. The performance has a concept closely related to Thai Buddhism. They completely ignored the noise of the outside world and the changes of the modern society. They just enjoyed everything in their hearts calmly and lived lazily in the sun, listening to the call of Buddha. Just like the salon skirt tied up at random, the surface is loose, but the spirit is extremely restrained and rigorous. They are places for farmers to carry out religious activities and also places for them to meet. Apart from professional monks and a small number of followers, few people show that they only believe in one religion.

4.2 Gorgeous Costumes

Long armour dance belongs to Thai court dance. Performers' clothing is mainly made of golden cloth, and the headdress is usually a golden hat in the shape of a high spiral tower, symbolizing that dancers wear a tower-shaped golden crown. The golden hat in the shape of a spiral tower is the symbol of the Buddhist landmark “stupa” in Thailand. Its bright colors, gorgeous costumes and magnificence are just like the Buddhist temples in Thailand, which are the embodiment of Buddhist colors. Most Southeast Asians worship God, but only a few of them really believe in God. In fact, they worship God only for a time to seek spiritual satisfaction. The way people in Southeast Asia treat dance is like the way of the gods. Faith will automatically adjust its cultural ecology, and the idea of “divine instruction of dancers” will realize the spiritual transformation of its dance style. Chinese Buddhist landmark “stupa” has a general Chinese appearance. The costumes are magnificent, glittering and brightly colored, just like Buddhist temples in Thailand, giving off a

resplendent feeling on the stage. If some supernatural power does not work, they will pray for help from another god. In this way, religion is constantly consolidated and diversified. The costumes and props of Changjia dance are permeated with religious culture, which fully embodies the traditional Thai Buddhist culture.

4.3 Traditional Music

One part of Thai dance that highlights the true nature of Buddhism is its traditional music. As a big Buddhist country, Thailand's music form is also closely related to religious culture. Indian Buddhism has exerted great influence on Southeast Asian literature, painting, music, dance, etc. Indian dance has exerted many influences on traditional dances in Southeast Asia. Among southeast Asian countries, Thai dance music is very unique, among which “kang” and “La Kun” are one of the famous traditional music forms. “Kang” is the etiquette of the court, which is based on the life of the court and mainly performs in religious activities and weddings and funerals. In addition to the invisible heaven, people also worship saints. Those saints are often heroes from real legends, or Sakyamuni whom they worship most, which are regarded as the symbols worshipped by Southeast Asians. In addition, it is also influenced by Chinese Confucianism, native culture and royal thoughts. These thoughts have different requirements for people's “self-determination” and “self-determination”. Therefore, Thai dance music chooses traditional folk music and dance music according to its style and function. Most of them still worship their ancestors, totems, ghost mountains, animism and other traditional religions, and some still believe in Catholicism and Christianity.

4.4 Elegant Dancing

Thai dance is performed with slow dance movements, and its posture is generally dominated by hand movements. Its basic posture is half squat and its body is in a three-way curved posture. It flexes and stretches with the music. In the process of dancing, its dancing gestures vary greatly and are symbols of different religious meanings. The dance vocabulary is used to embody the Buddhist thoughts of religion, mainly the interpretation of the Buddhist thoughts of sacrifice, religion, etiquette, prayer and equality. The interpretation of the relationship between man and god in the language of dance is the result of the long-term development of religious culture and history. Religious dance not only has strong symbolic significance of religious culture and art, but also contains the changes of people's spiritual world and aesthetic consciousness in different nationalities, regions and times. On the whole, it presents a moderate, gentle, calm, conservative and restrained style, creating a holy, quiet, lofty and solemn emotional world, as if every move and pattern must be authorized by God.

5. Conclusion

The dance forms and movements in Southeast Asia are influenced by their regional characteristics and determined by the process of cultural formation, especially the prevalence of religious culture. The shaping of dance forms and dance connotations is more regional and unique. Exploring the essence of Southeast Asian religious culture through the performance form of dance art has certain practical significance to the study, dissemination and exchange of Southeast Asian religious culture, folk customs and arts. The acceleration of the process of economic globalization has provided a wider space for the development of the cultures of all ethnic groups in the world and their exchanges and integration. The competition of cultural soft power has become an important chip for countries to establish themselves in the world market. As a worker engaged in modern art, the author has a better understanding of the meaning of modern times, and also knows that everything will be extremely counter-productive. Perhaps it is necessary to find a combination point between restraint and indulgence, to strike a balance between tradition and modernity, and to finally unify the two in the commanding heights of human nature. As a cultural form, dance can become a tool and means for the country and the nation to spread ideology and culture and create material and economic wealth.

References

- [1] Yin Jiage. (2016). Analysis on Comparative Study and Value Embodiment of Folk Dances in Southeast Asian Countries-Taking Indonesian Java Dance and Thai Namwang Dance as Examples. *Music Time and Space*, no. 8, pp. 182-182.
- [2] Yang Zhixiao. (2015). Aesthetics of Restraint-An Interview with Southeast Asian Dances. *Ge Hai*, no. 4, pp. 107-108.
- [3] Lu Lijing, Liu Liang. (2016). Exchange and Cooperation of Dance Culture and Art in Southeast Asia. *Peony*, no. 24, pp. 115-116.
- [4] Lu lijing, Chen linhua. (2015). Investigation and study of dance culture in Thailand's characteristic scenic spots. *art guide*, no. 5, pp. 279-280.
- [5] Liu Haiwei. (2015). Ming Empire's Attitude to Western Countries from Zheng He's Dispute on Religious Belief. *Journal of Yuan History and Ethnic and Frontier Studies*, no. 2, pp. 109-115.
- [6] Long Boyu. (2016). The Contradictory Mentality of Thai Royal Family in Reform during Rama Reform. *Peony*, no. 14, pp. 111-112.
- [7] Long Qinghua. (2015). Hani Ethnic Identity and Border Social Stability. *Journal of Honghe University*, no. 1, pp. 6-8.
- [8] Liu Yanqing. (2016). The Power of Religion-On the Influence of Buddhism on Thai Politics. *Silk Road Vision*, no. 20, pp. 114-115.