

AN ANALYSIS OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF MIAO DANCE CULTURE IN SOUTHWESTERN CHINA

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ABSTRACT

The dance culture of Chinese Miao nationality has developed with the history of Miao nationality. The Miao nationality has a long history. What's more, due to war and other reasons, the history of the Miao nationality is also a history of migration. During the war and migration, the Miao people don't fear brutal force and worked hard to survive while developing their

own dance culture. They record history with dance and write a glorious chapter for their own history.

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INTRODUCTION

This paper considers the "Miao" as a cultural community in space and a continuous process in time. The focus of the research is mainly the two complementary aspects of its cultural characteristics and evolution track, that is, to scientifically illustrate its cultural survival reality and historical overview, including external shape and internal structure by corresponding methods and technologies. Dance is a cultural phenomenon of human society. We are far from fully understanding its characteristics and values. But people nowadays have gradually become accustomed to conceptually considering dance (including folk dance) as a much narrower artistic phenomenon instead of a cultural phenomenon with a broad meaning. In practice, it has changed from an open activity close to the whole people to cultural and human commodity production and marketing.

In China, due to the dominance of the Han culture and its differentiated song, dance, and music from the Han and Tang

1. Historical Background of Miao Dance Culture in Southwest China

It is generally believed that the origin of the Miao is related to

dynasties, which were largely independent practices by the time of the Ming and Qing dynasties, most of the popular dance concepts and their regulated dance activities are narrow artistic phenomena. On the contrary, due to the independence of Miao culture and the continuity of history, the dance activities of Miao community are closer to the multi-functional national cultural phenomenon. Therefore, if we want to analyze it, the views and methods adopted should naturally go far beyond the dance art. In this paper, one of our main aims is to restore the original Miao dance, from the open framework of Cultural Sociology, while noting the differentiation dance pattern in many ethnic cultures, in order to help explore the inner characteristics and evolution traces of "dance towards life and life towards dance", and to reveal how the "process" corresponding to the "result" develops gradually. In order to restore the Miao dance, we must have an overall understanding of the Miao culture to get a practical background and support for the dance phenomenon.

the "Jiu Li", which is more than 5,000 years from now. According to Chinese historical records, "Jiu Li" is an early tribal alliance living in China in ancient times. The leader of the "Jiu Li" is called "Chi-You". The people under the

command of "Chi-You" are the "Miao people". After the "Jiu Li", it is Yao, Shun, and Yu period. The descendants of "Jiu Li" gradually formed a new tribal alliance through development, known as "Three Miao", also known as "Youmiao" or "Miao people". After "Three Miao", the records about "Miao" were interrupted for a time. During Xia, Shang, and Zhou periods, a large tribal group appeared in the ancient records, which is known as "Jing Barbarians" or "Barbarian Jing", sometimes also known as "Jing Chu" or "Jing". Because it was located in the south, it was also called "Southern Barbarians". It is generally believed that the "Jing Barbarians" are the descendants of "Three Miao". During Spring and Autumn and Warring States period, the Miao ancestors were integrated into the Chu people and the Chu state. After this period, in Qin and Han dynasties, the area "Jing Barbarians" lived belonged to the Wuling County, so "Chu Jing" was changed into "Wuling Barbarians". As there are "five streams" in Wuling County, the "Wuling Barbarians" were also called "Wuxi Barbarians", and some of them were directly referred to as "Wuling Miao" or "Wuxi Miao" in later historical records. ". During Tang and Song dynasties, the ethnic name of the Miao began to be distinguished or clarified from "Barbarians". During Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties, the number of records about "Miao" increased significantly. But there were two situations: First, the word "Miao" was preceded by "Zhongjia", "Dong" "Shuijia" and other words, which refers to today's Buyi, Dong, Shuijia and other ethnic groups, but not Miao; Second, add the words "red", "flower", "black", "white", "Gaopo" and "Shuixi" in front of the word "Miao" according to the dress color and location, which is consistent with the Miao nationality today. It can be seen that people's understanding of "Miao" has been refined to the level of the branch. Only after the founding of the People's Republic of China was "Miao" established as a formal and unified ethnic name.

Miao folk dances include reed-pipe wind instrument dance, copper drum dance, wooden drum dance, Xiangxi drum dance, bench dance, and the ancient ladle dance, etc. (Wang Guoshua, 2010) reed-pipe wind instrument dance is most widely spread. The dance is mostly performed with four steps, but there are also jump steps, point steps and left-right rotation, and other jumping methods. The "Miao Youth Dance" led by Jin Ou, a first-class Miao actor, was filmed in 1963 as a dance art film "Colorful Butterflies flying" and staged in the United States, Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong, and other places. It was deeply loved by the public. The Miao nationality is a rich nation in song and dance. There are nearly ten kinds of "Drum Dance" in Miao nationality. Miao "drum dance" is recorded in the Tang

Dynasty's "Record of the government and the public "on the " Wuxi Barbarians, whose parents die, saw their corpse outside the village. He buried them three years later, playing drums and singing song. The relatives drank and danced for more than a month " (Wang Chenglue, Nie Jidong, February 2018). Therefore, the record shows that the Miao nationality has a long history of "Drum Dance". The "wooden drum dance" of the Miao nationality is a form of "Drum Dance" in the large-scale worshipping activity held every 13 years. During the festival, the men and women dance for three days, forgetting to eat and sleep all day and all night. "Flower dance" is a necessary self-entertaining dance for Miao people to celebrate traditional festivals such as "June 6", "August 8", "catching up with summer", "catching up with autumn" in the lunar calendar (Guo Shisi, 2009). At that time, a drum is set up in the center of the square where the festival is held, and three people are responsible for beating it. Two people with double mallets hit the drum skin, and one person with a single mallet hits the drum clapper. There are no restrictions on the number of people and men and women who participate in collective dances. Before the dance, the drummers sing the virtues of the person who invented the "Wooden Drum" in their own language as a memorial to their ancestors. Then, the people dance in a circle around the drum to the accompaniment of the drumbeat. The basic dance postures of these dancers are mostly based on the simulation of various life movements, with some martial arts elements added to make the dance movements soft and vigorous. The "Flower Drum Dance" is characterized by two drummers performing a variety of symmetrical dance postures while rotating, turning over, or jumping, and playing harmonious and unified drum music at the same time. The Miao folk dance "Monkey Drum" is a male performance dance in which three or more people simulate the various habits and drumming postures of monkeys. During the performance, one drummer plays behind the drum, while the other drum faces the dancer who wears a monkey costume and draws a monkey face. The dance moves are mostly simulated monkeys eating corns, swinging, watching drums, testing drums, playing with each other, etc. The dancers playing the monkeys can box the drums or hit them with mallets. The whole "Drum Dance" is not only funny, enthusiastic, and highly technical but also has a certain dramatic plot. The Miao folk self-entertainment "Stepping Drum Dance" is an indispensable women's "Drum Dance" for annual festivals and festive gatherings, especially for the "Sister Festival" in March of the lunar calendar. During the dance, a young girl sings and walks into the field, and then continues to sing and beat the

drum. The lyrics of the song are basically a call for sisters not to miss the opportunity to come and worship. Afterward, many well-dressed Miao sisters gathered around the drum and danced in front of the drum. At the climax of the dance, the peripheral audience of men, women, and children can also enter the dance and form several concentric circles to dance together. The dance is free and cheerful. Sometimes the legs tremble to drive the whole body. "Fanpai Wooden Drum dance" has become a representative dance for Miao celebrations and visiting other countries. It is praised as "oriental disco" by friends from neighboring countries. After the founding of New China, on the basis of the various kinds of self-entertainment and performance "drums" of the Miao, people created the "four-sided drums", which is danced by four people beating at the same time. This "drum dance" is open to both men and women, with four people standing in front of the drum and hitting it with mallets in both hands. The drums are beaten in a unified rhythm while performing the prescribed routine. After each routine is completed, everyone switches to the next drum position in a clockwise direction and then performs the other routines, which are both performative and entertaining. The history of the Miao playing and dancing with the reed-pipe wind instrument dance has been recorded since the Song Dynasty. The dance image in the Qing Dynasty records in "Guangyu Shenglan": "every early spring, choosing a flat land, the male blows the reed-pipe wind instrument, the female rattles the bell, sings and dances in circles, which is called dancing under the moon"([Song] Zhu Mu, June 2016), which is a reflection of the current so-called "Copper Bell Dance". The Miao ancestors who once lived on the shores of Dongting Lake took birds as their totem, so today's Miao women's silver crowns and long skirts with colored strips are still full of the colorful feathers of the pheasants and the patterns of flying birds. Up to now, the Miao Nationality in the south of Guizhou Province has preserved a large-scale dance "reed-pipe wind instrument hall" derived from ancient worship. During the performance, a man plays the reed-pipe wind instrument, a man beats a bronze drum, and a young girl dressed in costume and wearing a silver crown dance in a bird-like manner with her arms slightly open. This scene is very similar to the decorative patterns on the surface of copper drums unearthed more than 2000 years ago in Kaihua, Yunnan Province. In addition, from the "drum beating and singing picture" on the copper drum-shaped shell container unearthed in Shizhaishan, Yunnan Province, we can further explore the close relationship between Miao and ancient Baiyue tribes and copper drum culture. Among the self-entertainment dances of

the Miao, there are also "pheasant dance" imitating the dynamics of pheasants wearing silver crowns and colorful long skirts, and wearing feather crowns, imitating pheasants to fight, jump and play (Di Shulong, 2017); "Bench dance" originated from women's housework such as embroidery and hemp rubbing.

2. Analysis of the Cultural Characteristics of Miao Dance in Southwest China

Culture, as a human creation based on nature, contains the complementary significance of Anthropology and sociology. Firstly, culture is the result of the advanced adaptive behavior of human beings. It is a derivative of the natural process of human physical evolution in the sense of Genesis, but it is not separated from this process. Specifically, it is the product of human society with a unique transmission system with animal instinct and genetic mode, including media, channels, methods, and purposes. From this perspective, human beings are a combination of genes and culture; secondly, from the perspective of social relations, culture is reflected in the characteristics of people's thoughts and behavior. It is composed of people's psychological quality, behavior, experience and knowledge, value orientation, and so on. However, in general, the focus of cultural studies is mainly on the sociological aspects of culture because its structural features are not only colorful but also easily changeable. Therefore, the Miao culture mentioned here also mainly refers to the socially creative behavior of the members of the Miao community and aims at the five aspects closely related to their dance system, that is, witch culture, farming culture, mountain culture, minority culture, and wordless culture.

Witch culture. In history, the Miao nationality has created its own system of witch culture, which is famous for its belief in ghosts and witchcraft. "Shangshu·Lu Xing", "Chu Language" and "Lv Lan" all record that the Three Miao Group, an ancestor of the Miao nationality, believed in polytheism and advocated witchcraft religion since ancient times. Witchcraft in the Chu region is popular. "Hanshu Geography" records that Jingchu "believes in witches and ghosts, worship the witches and ghosts"(Zhou Zhenhe, May 2021). The Chu and Wu people, whose main body is the Miao nationality, completely ignored the statement of unrestrained worship. Although witch belongs to a form of religion, it has no religious theological significance in the strict sense. According to Malinowski, there is a certain difference between the two: Religion creates a set of values and directly achieves its purpose. Witchcraft is a set of actions that has practical value and is a tool to achieve

the goal. The witch culture has two meanings: it refers to social behaviors related to certain ghosts and gods, and it refers to the psychological basis for the survival of such behaviors and a series of values derived from it. As two complementary internal forces, the witch culture plays an important role in the occurrence and development of the Miao dance system. On one hand, most of the Miao dance system can be regarded as different forms of witchcraft. "They like working related singing and dancing, and pleasing gods"; on the other hand, it can be regarded as the symbolic carrier of ghosts and gods, because "dance is especially the main component of all religious ceremonies." On the whole, because the Confucian tradition in the Han community has become increasingly dominant, Chinese culture is regarded as a historical culture. One of its notable features is to respect ghosts and gods. Therefore, some people say that China has no religion-Buddhism and Islam are imported, which can easily lead to one-sidedness. If it is recognized that "Chinese culture" is composed of multi-ethnic cultures and has diversified characteristics, the characteristics of "witch religion" embodied in the Miao culture should be taken seriously. On the contrary, we should not rashly erase the "witch culture" and other national characteristics due to the influence of the Confucian ideas of respecting ghosts and gods but keeping them away.

Farming culture. The growth of wild rice has been recorded in China since ancient times. It cannot be considered that it was introduced from India, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia in ancient times. As far as the current way of life is concerned, the Miao nationality still belongs to agricultural culture on the whole. Compared with nomadic culture, industrial culture, and marine culture, it is mainly characterized by its close relationship with the natural biosphere: Heaven and earth, clouds, sun and moon, soil and water, animals, plants, lighting, etc., all of which have left a deep impression on the representation of its dance culture. This is obvious in the ancient Miao epics such as "Miao Ancient Songs" in southeastern Guizhou province, "Guo Nie" in western Hunan province, "Long Wu Zhi Li" in the Damiao Mountains of Guangxi province, "Ge Zi Ye Lao - Ye Jue Bi Kao" in northeastern Yunnan province, and "Yang Lao Hua" and "Ge Lao Chi Yan" in northwestern Guizhou province. From the psychology of community members, the marks of this farming culture include the Pan God-consciousness such as attachment to the land, sensitivity to the seasons, worship of the sun and moon, fear of disasters, and the emotional connection to everything. All these make the Miao dance mostly related to

farming: rain, worship, praise, species, cultivation, harvest, and joy. Some people believe that modern industrial civilization is destroying all kinds of classical art in human culture, especially dance, drama, art, and poetry. Although it is a little bit extreme, the thinking of cultural stage theory contained in it helps us to explain the internal reasons for the changes of human social behaviors such as dance, which is a phenomenon of surface structure. From the perspective of living style, farming culture is indeed quite different from industrial culture or civilization, which should become an effective coordinate for us to understand the Miao dance system.

Mountain culture. Different from plain culture and navigation culture, mountain culture is characterized by several community fractures on the premise of overall identity. In history, the Miao nationality was famous for its continuous migration. Regardless of its ancient birthplace, in terms of the current distribution of the members of the Miao community, most of them basically lived in the mountains of Southwest China for a long time. As recorded in the historical records, "the Barbarians are different, most of them live in valleys and forests", "Miao people... like to live in mountains", "Miao people...like to live near rocks", "Miao people like to live in the forests", "Miao people... Most of them live in high mountains". There is also a common saying among Guizhou folk that "high mountain Miao, Shuizhong family, Lun Lao live near rocks". Therefore, the Australian ethnologist Geddes wrote in his "Mountain Immigration", it is reasonable to regard the Miao nationality as a typical mountain nationality. Due to the continuous mountains, blocked traffic, the self-sufficiency in the farming culture, and the specific marriage ties and festival needs, the communities often live in the forest and don't communicate with each other until death. Therefore, a scattered distribution in culture and geography is formed: complex branches, diverse costumes, different languages, and customs. It should be noted that in addition to the community fracture caused by national migration in the sense of cultural history, the natural barrier of the mountains has greatly affected the surface characteristics of the Miao community culture. Its differences and psychological self-isolation can be regarded as a natural influence on the culture. And in this sense, its dance system and festival customs system together play an important role in communicating its collective national consciousness to maintain a complete common cultural circle even though it has been broken by migration and evolution. At the same time, this fractured mountain culture has led to several divergences in the dance system, i.e., the dance

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prototypes of the same parent content often derive from several distinctive variants (which can be called "sub-dance forms"). The same structure of rhythms and rituals may contain different imagery in many eras.

Minority culture. Compared with the Han nationality, because of the relatively small number of people, the Miao feel surrounded by strong cultures as a unique culture. For the overall Chinese culture, the influence and participation of the Miao culture are much weaker. This is the internal meaning of the so-called "minority culture". One is the small number of people and the other is the small influence. The combination of the two produces a unique "minority culture" feature, that is, the prominence and strengthening of national self-consciousness and the derived crisis consciousness and exclusivity. On the contrary, as a "majority culture", the Han nationality is often prone to egocentrism while the national self-consciousness is relatively weakened because it occupies an extremely significant dominant position in the same cultural map. This "minority" feature of Miao culture has a great impact on its dance system. Its most prominent feature is to continuously strengthen its national self-consciousness through various dance performances. Seeing from what we know and feel, its dance almost shows the world: we are the Miao nationality, we come from the bank of the Yellow River and the Yangtze River; We have long-distance migration and experienced hardships; We have our own unique culture. Wordless culture. At least in China, the standard for judging whether members of ethnic minorities have culture is whether

CONCLUSION

All in all, the superficial structural features of Miao culture, such as Miao witch, farming, mountainous areas, minority, and wordless, act as both original and constraining factors to give the seemingly disorganized Miao dances a unified framework in the cultural sense, thus form an organic whole. It is a pity that for such a unified and complete system, most of the collectors and researchers recently have taken the concept of

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[Brief introduction to the author] 1. Man Mengling, (1991-), female, Miao, the doctoral student of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, the lecturer in School of Humanities of Beibu Gulf University, director of the professional committee of Art Anthropology of China Anthropology and Ethnology Research Association. 2. Phakamas Jirajarupat (1978.11 -), female, Thailand, Ph.D., Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, doctoral supervisor, research direction: Dance. 3. Jin Qiu

they know Chinese characters. This is not a very narrow view of mechanical culture, but at least a rather one-sided view of culture. As mentioned above, culture is the blending product of human natural attributes and social behavior. Wherever there is such integration, there is culture. The word is just a symbolic material carrier and a form of existence. There are many forms or material carriers for culture. If divided by characters, up to now, it can be divided into three types: wordless culture, the word culture, and super word culture. The information carrier of wordless culture is the main language. Word culture is the form of language – word. The super word culture is a sequence of super phonetic symbols. With the help of this framework, the wordless characteristics of Miao culture deserve our careful analysis. There is no detailed archaeological excavation, and it is difficult to know its ancient details today - whether there are words first and then lost or, there are no words -but several word experiments in history have achieved little results. It is very obvious. Even though a newly created Miao language was tried out in the 1950s, the wordless culture should become another prerequisite for the study of the Miao dance system. From the point of view of this paper: because the Miao nationality has no words, its dance system has become a symbol system, a behavior system and a tool system, and a combination of the three - an operation behavior system, so as to maintain the cultural significance and rich practical functions far beyond the modern dance Art (Wang Guoshuai, 2010). It can be said that dance is a gene, symbol, and polymerization of Miao culture.

modern dance as a model and paid attention to only a few parts of its it-movement and music. It leads to a monotonous and one-sided background of materials on which we base our creation and research of adaptations nowadays. Collectors and researchers are basically influenced by a narrow concept of dance, ignoring many components of the Miao dance system. Of course, it is not surprising that there are still relatively few systematic studies of Miao dance now.

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