Post-earthquake Restoration of Qiang Dance Cultural Creation and Performance Take the Original Work *Never-ending* for an Example

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Abstract

This paper discusses how cultural subjects consciously, dynamically and selectively pass on their own culture under the guidance of the outside world through the narrative and analysis of fieldwork data, and explores the implementation overview, specific measures, value and significance of restoration and protection of dancing culture after the disaster and the related reflections taking the original Qiang dance work *Never-ending* as an example. Meanwhile, the traditional Qiang dance is restored to soothe the hearts and minds of the Qiang people affected by the disaster, and a new form of Qiang dance is used to bring out the goodwill of the Qiang people to love their beautiful homeland.

Key Words: Post-earthquake Recovery; Dance of Qiang Nationality; Creative Performance

Instruction

There are 300,000 Qiang people in the upper reaches of the Minjiang River in Sichuan Province, China, who mainly live in the southeast of Aba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province; the south of Beichuan county is the Yi Nationality, with a population of around 6.58 million in Sichuan Province, Yunnan Province and Guizhou Province; to the west is the vast Tibetan Nationality, with a population of 4.59 million, spreading over a quarter of China; and to the east is the even larger Han Nationality with a population of 1.2 billion - probably the largest ethnic group in the world. In this region, Minjiang River, Jianjiang River and the tributaries cut through the edge of Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, creating deep valleys between 3,500 and 4,500 metres above sea level. These deep valleys are called “ravine” by the local Qiang people in Chinese, and Qiang villages are located in these ravines. It is from these “ravine” that the “Qiang dance post-earthquake recovery study” is conceived. (Wang, 2008)

In view of the long history and culture of the Qiang Nationality, the resilient national character and positive attitude towards life, I am keen to conduct a study on the real restoration and innovative development of the profound fracture of the Qiang dance culture after the earthquake, with the aim of creating Qiang dance works designed to restore the core culture and trauma of the Qiang people to show the preservation and transmission of the millennium-old Qiang dance culture.

Objectives

1) To create schemes for post-earthquake restoration of Qiang dance

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2) To design and create Qiang dance works to restore the core culture and spiritual trauma of Qiang Nationality

Methodology

This study adopts a combination of qualitative research methods, including documentary method and field investigation, and has a summary analysis on data. As this paper is about post-earthquake recovery, the 2008 earthquake is an important point in the research process, and which is divided into two periods: pre-earthquake and post-earthquake. This paper is to discuss how cultural subjects consciously, dynamically and selectively pass on their own culture, and to explore the implementation overview, specific measures, value and significance of restoration and protection of dancing culture after the disaster and the related reflections taking the original Qiang dance work *Never-ending* as an example. Meanwhile, the traditional Qiang dance is restored to soothe the hearts and minds of the Qiang people affected by the disaster, and a new form of Qiang dance is used to bring out the goodwill of the Qiang people to love their beautiful homeland.

Data Collection

The destination of this study is the Qiang people in the upper reaches of the the Minjiang River in Sichuan, China, i.e. Heihugou and Chibusu in Maosian, Shuimo Town, Longxi Township and Luobo Village in Wenchuan County, and Puxigou and Xuecheng in Lixian. 6 villages of 868 people were selected for the study and the criteria for selecting the sample of 6 villages are listed below.

- The areas have been designated as key areas in the Qiang Cultural and Ecological Protection Experimental Area Plan during the national post-earthquake reconstruction process, which are part of the Qiang Cultural Protection Area at the national level.
- The integration between Qiang handicrafts, Qiang dance culture exhibition, special catering, farmhouse and other projects and tourism in these areas are more developed, and the tourists can profoundly feel the fission that has occurred in the process of the survival and development of the new contemporary Qiang dance.

Conclusion

The concept of “core kinetic energy” in the original Qiang dance work *Never-ending* belongs to the biology of medicine. In 1890, the German scientist Altmann discovered that mitochondrion are important organelles for the production of ATP in living cells with aerobic metabolism. By consuming oxygen and breaking down food, cells convert the energy in food into the body's core kinetic energy, ATP, so oxygen and food are important components of ATP.

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3 The above proper nouns are local place names.
4 ATP is the abbreviation of adenosine triphosphate. The structure of the ATP molecule can be abbreviated as A-P~P~P, where A represents adenosine, P represents the phosphate group and ~ represents a special chemical bond called a high-energy phosphate bond. ATP is the direct source of energy for life activities and is a high-energy phosphate compound in the cell.

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The most important efficacy of post-earthquake reconstruction is naturally economic development rather than cultural preservation, and cultural preservation only provides opportunities for economic development. Under this background, cultural preservation faces many crises. One of the prerequisites for cultural preservation is cultural identity, which is also a prerequisite element for the emic protection. “People are the subject of culture, and culture is a system guided by values. Cultural values are the deep structure and core elements of national culture, which are the intrinsic motivation of national cultural identity, and only a culture that is identified and recognized by the nations can be inherited and developed.” (Giltz, 2000)

Therefore, the core elements of Qiang dance post-earthquake reconstruction should start from the national cultural values. The author believes that the cultural value of Qiang dance should be analysed in terms of the dynamic elements and the ecological elements of dance.

Analysis on dynamic elements of dance, the core kinetic energy of restoring Qiang culture

1. Analysis of life dynamic elements

The Qiang region has been conditioned and influenced by geographical and cultural factors for a long time, so the style and movement of Qiang dance differ greatly from that of other folk dances. There are also great differences in the division of the types of dancing forms and in the definition of styles. In terms of geographical division, “the Zagunao River basin with Longxi, Jiashan and Puxi as the focus”, the dance movements are mostly slow rhythmic, long lines of postural body modification movements, and the aesthetic sense of this region favours the voluptuous curves of women, with particular emphasis on female crotch movements in the dance. However, the Qiang dance in Wenchuan and the Chibusu and Shaba of Maoxian no longer emphasizes the movement of the hips, and the dance moves are spirited and bold. (Wu, 2016)

Due to the terrain, the Qiang people mainly live in high mountains and deep valleys in the upper reaches of Minjiang River. As the dance movements come from daily life, the Qiang people who live on the cliffs, tend to focus more on their knees when walking up and down the mountains due to the natural environment, so the dance movements are based on the trembling of the knees. When walking in the mountains, the Qiang people will first use their feet to slowly probe out to test the mountain path due to the steep terrain, and the center of body weight will not actively lean forward. Therefore, the hip joints will form an active probe, thus giving rise to the kinetic characteristics of the top hip rhythm, the axial rotation of the body along one side, and the legs vibrating with the rhythm as well as rolling along the edge. Such kinetic feature is the key point of Qiang dance rhythms and is also a typical Qiang dance movement style feature. (As shown in the picture)

The root of core element of Qiang dance recovery come from the folk tradition, so the tradition of folk dance is rooted in the national culture, is the condensation of people's life, customs and spiritual civilization value, and is the externalization of people's sincere feelings and emotions. The traditional folk dance style, rhythm, posture, basic movements and the folk culture and folklore behind them are the most fundamental original form of this national folk dance, which also has a certain national uniqueness. If folk dance is compared to a tree, then its roots are the tree roots, and the solidity of the roots refers to the most traditional folk
style, form and the cultural meaning behind it. The solidity of the roots is the key to the tree's survival, so the key to the survival of folk dance lies in folklore and tradition. With the changes of the times, the development of economy and the enrichment of entertainment forms, it is more and more difficult for us to enjoy this pure local performance, and the best way to protect an art form is to make it inherit and continue.

*Never-ending* is a practical exploration of folk dance stage creation based on the post-earthquake reconstruction of Qiang Nationality, and its creation makes Qiang folk dance known in the form of work, retains its traditional form, style and rhythm, and inherits the dancing form, style characteristics and cultural connotation of traditional folk dance. The most fundamental aspect of the inheritance of the creative form on stage is the preservation and continuation of the most traditional elements of the dance, such as style, movement and physicality, as well as the artistic forms and formal characteristics of the folk performances. More importantly, the physical form of Qiang folk dance means that the cultural and folkloric connotations of the people's lives of this nationality and region are preserved and carried forward.

2. Analysis of dynamic elements of dance ontology

The work *Never-ending* takes the image of “Goddess Shalang” from the history of the Qiang Nationality and uses the figure to reflect the simplest and most genuine humanity of the Qiang women. At the same time, through the cultural connotations of the female figure, the significance and role of human beings are considered in promoting the study of folk dance by traditional national culture when having practical creation.

From the historical data, it is found that another important feature of ancient Qiang culture is the persistence of female center. The Qiang have been a female-centred society since the beginning of their social organization. By the 8th century, the two female Qiang states (Qiangtang and Changdu), which possessed salt mines, were the two tribes that remained female-centred for the longest time, and were the two Qiang states that died the latest. (Chen, 2007)

This cultural trait had a great influence on the formation of the Qiang dance, which still survives today. Apart from the wonderful visual effects in morphological characteristics, the dance rhythm of “top hip” also contains the expression of hazy “sexual consciousness” in the female centered society. In the Qiang region, it was once customary for a group of women to dance naked in a fixed room during the spring ploughing, with movements showing women giving birth to babies, in order to pray for the good harvest in the next year like human reproduction. The crotch movement of the Qiang dance shows that in ancient times, with the language somewhat restricted, courtship between men and women also took the form of dance, with both parties relying on dance movements to communicate their feelings. It is evident that the specific crotch movements of the Qiang dance are also a remnant of the dance rhythms that were used to express sexual love in ancient times. It can also be seen from the paintings that, from ancient times to the present day, the aesthetic consciousness on women has always focused on fullness, curves and, especially, the exaggeration of the female crotch, which is consistent that the ancient Qiang people who took hunting and animal husbandry for their living in the primitive period valued fullness and fatness as beauty. The crotch movements in Qiang dance still maintain the character of charm but bold and unrestrained and the primitive aesthetic concept. The unique rhythm of the reciprocal rotation of the hips is also related to the exquisite costumes of the Qiang people, which were developed later in production. When the Qiang women's belts are pendant with long spikes, beads and bands of various colors, it shows a distinctly feminine flavour when rotating the hips. (As shown in the picture)
Regionally, the Zagunao River basin has Longxi, Jiashan and Puxi as the main focus, and the dance movements are mostly in long lines. The dance steps and dynamics can be expressed as follows: turn the hips--top the hips--top the feet--move the hips--stretch the knees and send the hips--mark time and collapse the shoulders--swing feet in the air--move the crotch sideways-- Pry the steps in waves. The hips are used in a range of movements, which shows the influence of the women's dance, which is different from the Baigou Qiang dance in the Lixian area. Another type of dance is found in Maoxian and Wenchuan, with a focus on Chibusu and Shaba. Not all dances in the Qiang dance require the top hip, for example, the Shaba's “Cheduonaduo”, also known as “two-sided flip”, involving jumping to the left and right, “Reyingbo”, also known as “four-cornered flip”, and “Xilaiwaxia”, also known as “jumping three-sided”, have a large range of movements, so it is impossible to have the top hip, and they do not have feet chasing, inward around the feet and deep squat. The Qiang people live mainly in the high mountains and deep valleys in the upper reaches of the Minjiang River, and carrying the goods back in the natural environment of the mountainous terrain, especially the cliffs, has a great influence on the formation of the Qiang dance. The burden on their backs restricts the movement of the arms to a certain extent, so they need to use their knees when going up and down the mountains, which has led to the formation of the knee trembling rhythm in the Qiang dance. People usually sidle because they live in an area where half of the mountain and half of the cliff. In the process of marching, in order to be safe, the Qiang people first use their feet to slowly try to move forward, so the gravity centre and upper body cannot move from the back foot to the front foot in time, thus forming the active exhumation of skeletal joints, which causes the top hips, the axial rotation of the body, the trembling of the legs, the circling and the body moving in a smooth edge. Such kinetic feature is the key point of Qiang dance and is also the foundation of the formation of the Qiang dance style.

Analysis on ecological elements of dance, the core kinetic energy of restoring Qiang culture

1. Analysis of natural environment ecological elements

The Wenchuan earthquake was devastating, and the towns, villages and various cultural heritages in the areas affected by the earthquake were damaged to varying degrees. One of China's ethnic minorities, the Qiang Nationality was mostly in the worst-hit area, and the Qiang culture was nearly devastated, with Qiang cultural carriers on the verge of disappearing. Watchtowers, the most representative of Qiang traditional architecture, were collapsed and Qiang buildings were damaged to varying degrees. More than 20,000 Qiang people were missing or died in the earthquake, accounting for 10 per cent of the entire Qiang population.(Zhang,2009)

Qiang culture is the link between the material and spiritual aspects of the Qiang Nationality, and the development of Qiang culture is fundamental to the survival and revival of the Qiang Nationality, so the inheritance and development of Qiang culture in post-earthquake reconstruction has important historical, economic and social environmental values. To a large extent, the study on the development of the Qiang villages and the revival of the Qiang the Qiang Nationality is to study the reconstruction and revival of the Qiang culture. Only by devoting ourselves to the protection and research of the Qiang culture, actively cultivating the heirs of the national culture, increasing the propaganda of the national culture and accelerating the development of the national culture industry, can we fundamentally realize the revival of the Qiang culture and thus the revival of the whole Qiang region.
On the premise of passing on the traditional aesthetic characteristics of Qiang folk dance, the stylistic characteristics of Qiang folk dance are applied to the creative practice of dance. At the same time, injecting the aesthetic awareness of recovering Qiang dance culture after the earthquake is the way for our generation to carry it forward after doing a good job of passing it on. The difference between staged folk dance and the traditional folk dance is that as a concentrated expression of the human spirit achievements, staged folk dance becomes an aesthetic body language and expression in accordance with the laws of artistic expression of a certain age through the creator's imagination and re-creation in the stage virtual space. Therefore, the essence of the so-called model pursuit is the national spirit and connotation in a broad sense, evolving on stage through figurative dancing forms in line with traditional aesthetics.

The work Never-ending tries to analyse the material of the Qiang folk dance and makes certain stage use while retaining the original stylistic features and cultural connotations, in anticipation of the recovery of the Qiang dance culture stage work after the earthquake.

2. Analysis of humanistic environment ecological elements

The Qiang folk dance style has an important relationship with the historical origins and production methods as well as the aesthetic sensibilities of the people. It can be clearly seen from the Neolithic painted pottery basin unearthed in Sunjiazhai, Datong County, Qinghai Province that the ancient Qiang dancers on the pottery dance with their arms in unison to the same rhythm, with a strong and cheerful body. It is very similar to the today’s Qiang folk dances in terms of physicality and dancing style. It can be seen that today’s Qiang Folk dance style is inherited from Qiang ancestors. The change in the production mode of Qiang Nationality from nomadism to a settled life of farming and herding and the frequent interaction between men and women gave the folk dances new contents and forms. In terms of step combination characteristics, apart from the relatively fixed starting and ending steps, the middle movements are free to change at will, so that the dancers' joyful feelings can be given full play. In addition, the dancing form is not restricted by the environment and musical accompaniment, so the dancers can dance with the songs and express themselves as much as they like, thus forming the characteristics of a joyful and dynamic dance. On account of the fact that they have lived in high mountainous areas for a long time, and their production and living materials mainly rely on human transport, with the movement of their arms restricted, there are few changes in hands, mainly leg movements in the dance. Due to the long time of walking in the mountains, the leg movements in the Qiang dance are flexible, agile and rich in variation, thus forming a style of Qiang folk dance in which the lower legs are flexible and changeable, jumping and joyful. (As shown in the picture)
To recover the “retain the base form and give new ideas” of Qiang folk dance is the important method for Never-ending creation, and the most remarkable feature is that the folk “entertainment” has changed to “performance”. The folk dance on the stage is no longer a field square game spontaneously participated by the masses, but a stage art created by professional dancers. In the creation of folk dance, we can not remove the original action form and law, but also need to give it the central idea of professional choreographer and director, and give its creator “new ideas” on the basis of retaining the folk form, that is, “retain the base form and give new ideas”. That is to say, folk dance works for the stage should retain the rhythm, form and movement of the body, and then the deconstruction of movement and the construction of language for the stage are carried out. The dynamic core of the creation should always be based on traditional aesthetics, construct a dynamic dance vocabulary that is not only derived from tradition but also has modern consciousness, and give it “new ideas” different from that of folk. The essence is to give consideration to the cultural connotation of folk dance. On this basis, the traditional folk dance posture, style and rhythm are applied to the creation of modern stage. “Retain the base form and give new ideas” keeps its basic folk form and endows it with a new sense of modernity. Therefore, taking Qiang folk songs and dances as the source, Never-ending has been adapted in a certain way and given a new idea while retaining its original dynamic law and form. The body symbol no longer belongs to the original meaning, but to complete the editor's thinking about the current works and the expression of the overall national spirit.

Performance feedback on Qiang dance work Never-ending

After the completion of Qiang dance work Never-ending creation, it was mainly promoted and shown through online and offline, especially by participating in influential competitions for experts to judge and give guidance at the same time, which also laid the groundwork for the work to be updated later.

The specific data are as follows: offline: mainly through the city, provincial and national competitions to promote, approximately 20 performances of various nature with an audience of more than 5,000 people within 6 months; online promotion includes new media and multimedia. At the same time, the performance is released on the official account, WeChat, TikTok, Kuaishou and other APP with about tens of thousands of audience.

Performance and competition:

1. On December 15, 2021, the original Qiang dance work Never-ending won the first prize for professional composition and the second prize for professional performance in the “National Unity Cup” Hebei Province Second College Folk Dance Competition jointly organized by the Hebei Provincial Ethnic Affairs Commission and the Hebei Provincial Education Department.

2. On October 16, 2021, the original Qiang dance work Never-ending was performed in the exchange performance activity of
100th Anniversary of the Hebei University Campus Dance Session.

Network platform release:

1. Have five consecutive days of limited time audience voting on https://www.hebnews.cn/ from November 25, 2021 to November 30, 2021 and receive 19811982 votes of likes in 5 days.

Suggestion

The Qiang dance work Never-ending explores through the combination of different Qiang dancing themes and the beauty of dancing forms, excavating and organizing the beauty of Qiang dancing forms and reflecting on the practice process, to pave the way for an in-depth study of the aesthetic perception of Qiang folk dance after the earthquake. When creating the Qiang dance, it combines the dancing themes with contemporary practice and is created from the aesthetic perspective of the Qiang people, which wins the national identity of Qiang people. It is both a historical accumulation of identifying the characteristics of the regional ethnic dancing forms, as well as an active practical exploration, which a process of gaining cultural identity and developing innovation.

Although this paper has covered the theory of Qiang culture and the inheritance and development of Qiang dance, it is far from comprehensive. The Qiang dance is the flower of culture and art from the ancient times in China, and has a very profound cultural and artistic accumulation. Based on this study, subsequent work can be carried out on the following levels: firstly, based on the vertical timeline, to explore the development of Qiang dance at different points in history in order to understand the impact of ethnic development policies on Qiang culture and art. Secondly, a horizontal perspective will be taken to compare the development of various folk dancing to explore the ways in which the culture and arts of each ethnic group have developed and their impact as social history has progressed.

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