



Study on the Dai Nationality of Gengma County's Kinnara Dance from the Perspective of "China-Asean" Community

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Abstract: This study, through the study of the Dai Kinnara dance and from the perspective of "China-Asean" community, aims to deeply understand the cultural and interactive relations among countries and ethnic groups in Indochina Peninsula and border areas, which will help promote the "Belt and Road" plan to enter a higher level of cultural integration, mutual understanding and collaborative progress. As an important part of Dai culture, Kinnara dance not only carries rich national history and cultural information, but also is an important carrier of Dai people's emotional expression and social life. This study further discusses the current status of the contemporary inheritance of the Kinnara dance, analyzes the main difficulties and challenges faced, and puts forward specific measures to protect the inheritance.

Keywords: cross-border nationality; Kinnara dance; the Dai nationality; cultural change

1. Introduction

The Dai, a minority nationality in Yunnan, China, has a profound historical heritage and a rich and colorful life style. They live in Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous Region and Dehong Dai Jingpo Autonomous Region in Yunnan Province. From the beginning of the ancient "Baiyue" tribe, its roots can be traced back to the distant past. This lifestyle and lifestyle handed down by the ancestors is still regarded as a symbolic sign of existence: worship of animals in the natural environment such as boa constrictor or eagle totem belief (the so-called "dragon and phoenix"); The art of body ornamentation (tattoo decoration), the affinity for water and the skill of sailing are among the representative elements of this culture.

In 2011, the White paper "China's Peaceful Development" put forward an innovative perspective, that is, to explore the common interests and universal values of mankind from the perspective of a global community of common destiny. In the strategic layout of foreign relations, neighboring countries are prioritized, especially the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which is regarded as the primary partner. The Trilateral Security Partnership (AUKUS) formed by the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia has become a counterweight to China's rise, as China's cooperation with neighboring countries has deepened and China's overall national strength has rapidly improved. At present, the community of common destiny built by China and ASEAN has entered the stage of co-creation. However, the establishment of AUKUS has brought more variables to the regional situation and further increased the uncertainty of in-depth cooperation between China and ASEAN at all levels[13].

At present, China and Southeast Asian countries have established special exchange mechanisms and carried out various kinds of cooperation in education, health and other fields, laying a solid foundation for the building of a China-Asean community of common destiny. In terms of cultural exchanges, many activities such as China-Asean Cultural Exchange Year, China-Asean Opera concert, China-Asean think Tank Strategic Dialogue Forum and China-Asean Cultural Forum have been held [13]. As a representative form of music and dance in the cultural circle of Southern Buddhism, it is not only spread within the Dai people in China, but also can see the figure of Kinnara and divine bird dance in Southeast Asia.

2. Dai Kinnara dance origin

In Yunnan, Thailand, Burma, Vietnam, and parts of India, the Dai in China, the Tai in Thailand, and the Shan in Burma share a common origin and practice Southern Buddhism. From ancient times to the present day, these places are popular with a pair of figures from the primitive religious mythology of India, that is, Kinnara and Kinnari. They are depicted as divine birds with the body of the first human bird and are considered to be the singers of the gods. With the rise of Buddhism, believers adopted the symbol of the divine birds. This bird dance, influenced by Indian culture and regarded as the source of mythology in Southern Buddhist areas, has become an important theme in etiquette and folklore[5]. Around 1950, the book *Union Dance* was published in Burma, which gave a detailed description of the Shan people's sacred bird dance, and con-

tinued to use the name “Kinnara, Kinnari” as the name of the dance[2]. At the same time, on the famous Dunhuang murals, artists also created many works with the theme of “Kinnara and Kinnari”, which became the gods of art in their hearts and left an eternal mark on the cave murals.

The Kinnara dance, also known as the Divine Bird dance, is a traditional Dai folk dance that originated in India and is very popular in the Dai areas of Southeast Asia and Yunnan Province of China. This kind of dance simulates the movements of birds and beasts and belongs to the quasi-avian dance, which is one of the symbolic image symbols of Southern Buddhism[6]. It is usually held during the traditional Dai festival of opening doors or catching up, and is now also performed in tourism activities.

The form of the dance is a male and female dance (Kinnara and Kinnari), based on the Dai boxing, coupled with the dance language of male birds. The dancer’s head is flexible, the pace is light, the movement is strong, full of masculinity, and the expression is vivid and full of rhythm. The basic movements of dance include walking, jumping and tumbling. The emotion is implicit, the dance language is rich, full of artistic charm, creating a happy atmosphere. After the continuous improvement of folk artists, now has a complete set of dance steps. Traditional Dai Musical Instruments are used for accompaniment, such as piano pieces, pineapple drums, wooden fish drums, cymbals and elephant-foot drums[3].

3. The evolution of the Kinnara dance

As an important part of Dai culture, Kinnara dance has experienced a long and varied historical evolution process. In ancient times, Kinnara began as a Dai religious ritual. At that time, the Dai people believed that through dance performances, they could pray for good luck and exorcise evil spirits, and protect the peace and prosperity of the tribe[1]. In the sacrificial ceremony, dance performance is not only an art form, but also a manifestation of faith. Dancers dressed in gorgeous costumes, decorated with colorful tail feathers behind the props, beautiful dance movements and passionate music let people intoxicated. This form of Kinnara has a strong religious connotation and is regarded as an important medium of communication with the gods.

3.1 Social structure change

With the passage of time and the development of society, the dance gradually expanded from religious rituals to various social activities. During celebrations, weddings, and harvest festivals in the Dai community, Kinnara has become an important form of entertainment for people to get together and relax. The dancers, accompanied by the joyful rhythm of the music, dance their bodies, jump, turn and rotate, forming a picturesque dance scene. The changes of the dance movements and the variations of the music echo the colorful life of the Dai people and convey their pursuit of a better life.

After the founding of the People’s Republic of China, with the enhancement of the protection consciousness of Dai culture, the tight Kinnara dance gradually received more attention and attention. The Chinese government has listed the dance as a national intangible cultural heritage and established a special inheritance base and dance team, providing strong support for the inheritance and development of the dance. The Dai community and tourism authorities have also actively organized dance competitions, cultural festivals and tourism exhibitions to further promote and pass on the Kinnara dance. Through these efforts, the dance has been widely recognized and appreciated, becoming a treasure of Dai culture and a symbol of national pride.

With the changes of The Times, social and cultural factors have a significant impact on Kinnara dance. As an important reflection of Dai cultural tradition and social change, Kinnara dance has undergone many changes and innovations. Under the influence of social culture, Kinnara dance gradually broke away from the shackles of religious rituals and evolved into a more diversified and expressive dance art form. Religious belief plays a central role in Dai society. Buddhism has exerted a profound influence on the daily life and cultural activities of the Dai people [8]. The Kinnara dance originally appeared as a sacrificial activity, as a way to express respect and faith in Buddha. However, with the passage of time, Kinnara dance gradually separated from religious rituals and became an independent art form. In the process, the form and content of the dance changed, incorporating more Dai historical stories, folklore and elements of daily life. This change enables the dance to express and display the rich connotation of Dai culture.

Changes in the social structure had a profound impact on Kinnara. In traditional Dai society, Kinnara is mainly performed by certain groups of people in the community, usually people of higher social status. However, with the development of society and the process of modernization, the social classes have become more diverse, and the dance is no longer limited to a specific social group. On the contrary, it gradually opened up to a wider group of people and became a popular cultural art form. This change in social structure has provided a greater space for the spread and development of Kinnara dance. Improvements in education and technology have also had a positive impact on the preservation and transmission of the dance. With the popularization of education level, people have a deeper understanding of the national culture. They pay

more attention to the protection and inheritance of traditional culture. At the same time, the development of modern science and technology has provided convenience for the recording, preservation and dissemination of Kinnara dance. Through the Internet, social media and mobile applications, the dance can be more widely spread to audiences at home and abroad, allowing more people to understand and appreciate the culture and art of the Dai people.

Social and cultural factors have played a crucial role in the development and inheritance of Kinnara dance. Changes in religious beliefs, changes in social structure, and advances in education and technology have brought new opportunities for the development of the dance. In order to better protect and pass on the Kinnara, we should respect and understand the Dai cultural traditions, pay attention to innovation and diversity, and use modern scientific and technological means to promote and disseminate this unique art form and make efforts for its future development.

3.2 The influence of political factors

As an important cultural heritage of Dai people, Kinnara dance has been affected by political factors during its long-term development. In the past, the political system of the feudal society promoted the development of the Kinnara dance. During that period, Kinnara was not only a part of Dai people's life, it also played an important role in royal and aristocratic social activities. Royal support allowed the dance to spread and develop widely. However, this model of development dependent on the upper classes limited the further development of the Kinnara, as its rise and fall were closely related to the interests and political stability of the upper classes.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China and the promotion of socialist policies, the government began to pay attention to the protection and development of national culture. Especially after the reform and opening up, the protection of intangible cultural heritage has become an important national issue, and the tight Kinnara dance, as an important intangible cultural heritage of the Dai, has been recognized and protected at the national level. For example, in 2022, the Kinnara dance was included in the provincial intangible cultural heritage list. This not only enhances the Dai people's pride in their traditional culture, but also provides policy support and financial guarantee for the inheritance and development of Kinnara dance.

Politics, however, is not entirely good for Kinnara. In a specific historical period, due to political movements and social unrest, the inheritance and development of Kinnara dance faced challenges. During the Cultural Revolution, many traditional cultures and art forms were attacked and suppressed as the "Four Old ones", and Kinnara was not immune. Many precious dance materials and props were destroyed, and the inheritors suffered a blow, which had a serious impact on the inheritance of Kinnara dance. [13]

Political factors have played a complex role in the development of the Kinnara. Political stability, policy support and funding have provided a positive impetus for the preservation and development of Kinnara dance. However, political instability and wrong policy directions have also brought challenges to the succession of the Kinnara. Therefore, in order to ensure the sustainable development of intangible cultural heritage such as the Kinnara, it is necessary for the government, society and all cultural inheritors to work together to create a favorable political and social environment.

3.3 The influence of economic factors

As an important part of Dai culture, Kinnara dance has a significant impact on the economic development of Gengma County. With the rise of tourism, Kinnara dance has become a highlight of attracting tourists, directly promoting the increase of local tourism income. According to statistics, the number of tourists received by Gengma County has continued to increase in recent years, and many of them are also attracted by Dai culture. This not only increases the local direct economic income, but also drives the development of surrounding catering, accommodation, transportation and other related industries. At the same time, the preservation and inheritance of the Kinnara also brings job opportunities. In order to better protect and inherit the dance, Gengma County has set up cultural inheritance centers, which not only provide jobs for local residents, but also train groups of inheritors, effectively passing on this traditional culture to the next generation. Kinnara dance to enhance the regional brand value also has a role that cannot be ignored.

Through the holding of various cultural festivals, Kinnara dance has become an important window for Gengma County and even the whole Dai area to show its cultural charm and social development achievements to the outside world. This brand effect not only enhances the visibility of Gengma County at home and abroad, but also attracts more investors and entrepreneurs to pay attention to and invest in the local economy. However, the economic impact has not been entirely positive, and the commercial operation of Kinnara has brought a number of problems. On the one hand, excessive commercialization may lead to the dilution of the essence of culture, and the original cultural connotation and artistic value are faced with the risk of being ignored or distorted. On the other hand, with the continuous expansion of the market, higher requirements have been put forward for the protection and inheritance of Kinnara dance. How to maintain cultural purity and sustainability

while developing the economy has become a major challenge that local governments and all sectors of society must face. In the future, while promoting economic development, it is necessary to balance the relationship between economic benefits and cultural values, and effectively protect and inherit the Kinnara dance culture, which will be a problem that Gengma County and even the whole Dai area need to seriously consider.

In general, the historical evolution of the Kinnara dance reflects not only the development and changes of Dai culture, but also the influence of social, political and economic factors on its formation and development. From ancient sacrificial ceremonies to contemporary celebrations and tourist exhibitions, the dance has maintained its unique artistic style and cultural connotation. It is not only a change of dance form, but also the epitome of Dai social history and cultural inheritance. In the evolution process, the dance actively integrates cultural elements from different historical periods, showing the resilience and vitality of Dai culture, and playing an important role in cultural inheritance and exchange in today's society. The Dai people are proud of their dance. By inheriting and promoting the dance, they show the charm and unique value of Dai culture to the world.

4. The contemporary inheritance and conservation of Kinnara dance

The inheritance methods and approaches of the contemporary Kinnara dance mainly involve three main aspects: the recording and archiving of the intangible cultural heritage, community education and public participation, and digital preservation and dissemination.

The recording and archiving of intangible cultural heritage is the most basic way to protect and inherit the dance. This work is carried out by the local cultural department in conjunction with educational institutions to ensure that every dance movement, music, costume and other elements are accurately recorded, and that the historical background and cultural significance of the dance are studied in depth. This provides important basic data for future research and teaching.

Community education and public participation are important ways to inherit the dance. In Gengma County and other places, local governments and cultural institutions regularly organize open classes and workshops to encourage local residents, especially the younger generation, to learn and perform the dance, in order to stimulate interest and awareness of the dance within the stockade. At the same time, the holding of Kinnara dance competitions and festivals has helped to strengthen the community's consensus and enthusiasm for protecting and passing on this cultural heritage. Taking Gengma County as an example, the Gengma Song and Dance Troupe has a Kinnara dance in its dance drama, and the dance "Who am I" is arranged with the Kinnara dance as the background. It has become an important window for the succession and dissemination of Kinnara dance. There are Gengma County song and dance troupe dance drama "Mengxiang Gengkan Dai boxer" also interspersed a lot of Kinnara and Kinnari dance; And in 2018, in the 8th International Macadamia Nut Congress held in Gengma, Lincang City, the Gengma County Song and Dance Troupe performed the Kinnara dance.

Finally, digital preservation and dissemination is an important supplement to modern inheritance methods. Through the creation of online archives and digital exhibitions, the use of the Internet and social media platforms to promote and educate Kinnara, not only introduce this traditional dance to the world, but also facilitate the study and research of Kinnara by researchers and enthusiasts. The advantage of this way of inheritance is that it can break through the geographical and time restrictions, so that the charm of Kinnara dance can be spread throughout the country and Southeast Asian countries.

5. Inheritance protection measures

Under the background of globalization, as a kind of Dai folk dance on the verge of being lost, its protection and inheritance are particularly important. In view of the inheritance difficulties faced by the contemporary Kinnara dance, various measures have been taken to ensure that this precious cultural heritage can be effectively preserved and continuously disseminated. Support and input at the government level is the foundation of the conservation work.

In recent years, the Chinese government has stepped up efforts to protect ethnic cultural heritage, and the Dai Kinnara dance of Gengma County has been listed as a provincial intangible cultural heritage, which not only enhances the social awareness of Kinnara dance, but also provides policy and financial support for its protection and inheritance. Relying on the intangible cultural heritage protection project, the local government has formulated a series of protection measures, including the establishment of an intangible cultural heritage database, the compilation and publication of books and materials related to the dance, and the shooting of documentaries, aiming to systematically collect and preserve the knowledge and performance forms of the dance.

Educational inheritance is an important way to protect the culture of Kinnara dance. Through the establishment of Dai dance courses in school education, the Kinnara dance is included in the scope of physical education and art education, so that students have the opportunity to contact and learn this traditional dance from an early age, so as to develop an interest in Dai

culture and hobbies. A number of schools and kindergartens in Gengma County have cooperated with art colleges to invite professional dance teachers and intangible cultural heritage inheritors to teach in the school, so that the dance skills can be directly passed on to the next generation through the mentor-apprentice inheritance model.

The involvement of community and civic organizations has also played a key role in the survival of Kinnara. In Gengma, some local non-governmental organizations and cultural societies are committed to organizing cultural activities and competitions related to Kinnara, increasing the public's understanding and interest in Kinnara through dance performances and other forms, and providing a platform for the inheritance and lovers of Kinnara dance to show and communicate. These activities have not only helped to enhance the social impact of Kinnara, but also promoted its innovation and development.

Finally, cultural inheritance with the help of modern scientific and technological means is also one of the effective ways to protect Kinnara. Through the extensive dissemination of the Internet and social media platforms, Kinnara can reach a wider audience, thus attracting more young people to participate in the learning and inheritance of Kinnara. The protection and inheritance of Kinnara requires the joint efforts of the government, educational institutions, communities, civil organizations and even the whole society. Through multi-pronged protection measures, we can not only ensure the effective preservation of this intangible cultural heritage, but also promote its innovative development in modern society.

6. Conclusion

As an important part of Dai culture, Kinnara dance is of great significance to the preservation and dissemination of traditional culture. Carrying on the Kinnara dance not only provides a deep understanding of Dai history and culture, but also helps the Dai people build pride and identity. The inheritance of Kinnara can also promote cultural innovation and development, so that it can integrate with contemporary society.

However, there are many challenges to inheriting the dance. The influence of globalization has popularized modern lifestyle, and the younger generation may be more inclined to modern entertainment and have less interest in traditional culture. The lack of traditional culture education in the education system also makes young people not have a deep understanding of the dance, and it is difficult to stimulate their enthusiasm for learning. The decline in the number of inheritors of traditional culture, who are generally older and limited in number, is also a serious problem.

In order to carry on the dance effectively, various measures need to be taken. Strengthen education on Dai culture, especially at the school and community levels, and raise young people's awareness and interest in traditional dance through cultural festivals and workshops. The use of modern media and technical means to spread, such as through video teaching, online courses and other forms to enable more people to contact and learn the dance. More support should be provided to the inheritors of traditional culture, such as providing financial support and creating performance opportunities, so as to encourage them to teach their skills to the younger generation. It is of profound cultural significance and value to inherit Chunnaro dance. Although we face many challenges, we are still expected to realize its continuous inheritance through our joint efforts. Only by integrating the traditional culture with the modern society and making the dance develop together with The Times can it maintain its vitality and charm and inherit and spread the treasures of Dai culture.

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