



# Some Reflections on the Development History of Long-sleeved Dance

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**Abstract:** Long-sleeved dance is one of the most representative forms of artistic expression in ancient China. It developed in the pre-Qin, Han and Tang dynasties. Researchers can clear the traces of ancient long-sleeved dance through many historical books and unearthed cultural relics. This paper mainly focuses on the development history of long-sleeved dance in the Han and Tang dynasties and discusses the external form and expressive elements of it with purpose of playing some role in better appreciation of the artistic value of Chinese classical dance and dance in the future.

**Keywords:** long-sleeved dance, Han Dynasty, Tang Dynasty

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## 1. Introduction

The long-sleeved dance has a long history: archaeologists discovered large-screen jade accessories with long-sleeved dancing figures in Jincun, Luoyang, Henan. Han Feizi Five Desserts says Long-sleeved dance shows how people wore long-sleeved robes and danced gracefully at that time, which shows the long-sleeved dance was widely spread in the pre-Qin period.

## 2. Long-sleeved dance in the Han Dynasty

Society and economy developed steadily in Han Dynasty, which provided a material basis for satisfying the sensual entertainment in upper class. With the unprecedented prosperity of the economy and increasingly communication with the West, the culture of South Asia and West Asia was gradually accepted. During that time, the song and dance of Han Dynasty broke away from the shackles of the ancient music and dance system, and folk dance gradually became popular, showing a hundred schools of thought contending.

Han Dynasty dance is rooted in realism, focusing on reflecting the various forms of life in society, and pursuing a simple, vigorous and energetic style, shining in the history of Chinese dance art. Descendants' research on the social life of the Han Dynasty provided rich and real image data and opened a broad road for the development of Chinese dance art and dance theory.

After research, most of the dance movements in the Han Dynasty is what we now call Long-sleeved dance which has extremely high requirements on image and temperament. Because the dance clothes are light and thin, such as all the long-sleeved dances have high popularity and expressiveness inseparable costumes, dancers must be light to present an elegant feeling. Han Dynasty books says dancer can dance with a slender waist, resist repairing sleeves with shading face, and stretch slender waist. On the unearthed bricks and stones of Han portraits, we can see the elegant temperament of the long-sleeves of the Chu dance.

Mrs. Qi, the concubine of Liu Bang, was especially good at the dance of QiaoxiuZheyao. According to historical records, after every weeping, she lingers. Hundreds of servants and servants have all learned to sing it, and the harem sang it loudly, and the sound reached the sky. Mrs. Qi was selected into the palace at the age of 16, because she was talented and proficient in various musical instruments. At that time, her vivid Chu Dance performance deeply moved Liu Bang and even reached an unparalleled level with her perfect performance in the dance of QiaoxiuZheyao which she was good at.

Out of deeply love, Liu Bang abolished the prince and replaced him and Madam Qi's son, King Zhao, as the crown prince. While, Liu Bang was strongly opposed. Failing to do so, Liu Bang saw Madam Qi and said, "I want to make our son the crown prince, but unfortunately the crown prince's wings are already full, and there is nothing he can do." There was a scene in the hall where Mrs. Qi danced gracefully against the background of Liu Bang's voice, and the emperor of the Han Dynasty, Chu Ge reconciled that Honghu is flying high, in one fell swoop. Thousands of miles, the wings have been reached, and it will cross the four seas. This sentence perfectly shows when Han Gaozu couldn't fulfill his wish and Mrs. Qi was distraught and expressed her grief most vividly in Liu Bang's Chu Song. The combination of emotions, with the addition of songs, has become a model for later generations to learn long-sleeved dance. There are many scenes of long-sleeved dance performances recorded in Han Fu poems. Fu Yi wrote in Wu Fu that the clothes are drawn from the wind, and the

long sleeves cross each other. It is described in Nandu Fu that the white cranes fly with cocoons and threads, the sleeves are tangled, and the courtyard is full, and the socks are crept up. Characteristics, dance posture and other aspects of the long-sleeved dance, giving people a strong desire to watch.

### 3. Long-sleeved dance in Tang Dynasty

Long-sleeved dance ushered in the heyday of development in the Tang Dynasty. Tang Dynasty set up music and dance institutions in the palace, such as Liyuan, Dachang Temple and other places, where all the singers and dancers from all over the world gathered here and created many excellent dance works. The dance of NichangYuyi is one of them. The sing of NichangYuyi is one of the most famous compositions, created by Li Longji, Emperor of Tang Dynasty. Famous music and dance with superb technical strength can be called a masterpiece of ancient art.

Bai Juyi is also very fond of singing and dancing. By appreciating the moving tunes and graceful dances, he described the dance of NichangYuyi as "floating and spinning in the light of the snow, sweetly sending you dragons in shock", from the poem we can see the dance is a collection of mount of traditional sleeve dance skills which presented the gentleness and flow of the dancer's body curve to the audience.

The origin of the Tang Dynasty dance painting *Night Banquet of Han Xizai* is recorded in the Northern Song Dynasty *Xuanhe Painting Manual*. Li Yu, the last emperor of the Southern Tang Dynasty, had always heard that Han Xizai's life was too debauched, but he could not stop it, so he dispatched the court painter. Hong investigated and found out authenticity of the phenomenon. After the painter and others sneaked into the home, they quietly observed Han Xizai's nightlife. Finally, according to Li Yu's instructions, he saw what he remembered, and soon after return, he successfully painted *Night Banquet of Han Xizai*. According to historical records, the Empress Li at that time did not accuse Han Xizai of living a lewd life but wanted to understand and dissuade Han Xizai from returning astray through this portrait.

The painting is divided into five parts: listening to music, dancing and watching, temporary singing, clear blowing, and banquet. There may be mutual influence between different parts, so I use a screen to adjust it so that the picture has the effect of a comic strip. There is no shortage of undulating effects and scenes that combine motion and stillness. In the second section of Night Banquet, Watching the Dance, this bridge section is the most famous dance in Tang Dynasty –Liu Yao Dance, which presented the audience with "taking the sleeves as the content and stepping on the foot as the festival". Li Qunyu's "Changsha Nine Days Climbing the East Tower and Watching the Dance" included in *Complete Tang Poems* says "Slow heroes cannot be poor and complicated to the end. The low back lotus breaks through the waves and the snow is lingering in the wind. Sorrow can't catch and fly away to chase Jinghong." This poem perfectly interprets the scene where Han Xizai was deeply attracted by Liu Yao Dance in his later years, expressing Han Hee-jae's deep-seated loss but unable to express his feelings.

The sleeve dancing and waist dancing are the manifestations of artistic charm and romantic feelings in the Han and Tang Dynasties. Poets, writers and emperors described long-sleeved dances on the unearthed cultural relics, which made future generations continue to rely on the words. Looking the historical traces of the long-sleeved dance without interruption, the artistic characteristics of more than 5,000 years can be preserved.

### 4. Summary

The dance of Shuixiu is the origin of the long sleeve dance. It integrates the characteristics of the Han and Tang sleeve dances on the basis of the ancient long sleeve dance performance, continuously improves the modern dance elements and finally forms a unique. It retains the characteristics of lightness and softness in Han Dynasty dance and derives new performance techniques such as flowers from sleeves. Nowadays, it has been qualitatively improved. Currently, the dance of Shuixiu focuses on dancing with long sleeves, which shows a graceful and elegant temperament and express innermost thoughts by virtue of long sleeves that reflect each other. The dancers use their moving lines and long skirts to bring the strength of their arms to the extreme, gently waving the long sleeves in hands, and constantly reversing at the top of heads to form a regular arc. The other arm can cross the rotator cuff from the front of the body in the opposite direction, so that there is an S shape between two sleeves and the body forms a moving small S. The natural combination of the two S is an extremely beautiful curve. The flowing long sleeves swing in the air, showing ripple makeup for a while, like clouds in the sky for a while, or scattered into the heart of the viewer like a wisp of smoke.

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