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The Movement Characteristic and Cultural Connotation of Gujiazi in Anhui Huagudeng Dance

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ABSTRACT

Anhui Huagudeng is a kind of folk performing art of Han nationality in China. There are many forms in this performing art in Anhui Huagudeng. For example, singing, dancing and small operas and so on. These art forms are not only rich, but also carry the culture of the Han Chinese. Therefore, Anhui Huagudeng is known as the "Ballet of the East" in China and internationally. This paper studies the movement characteristics and cultural connotation of "Gujiazi" in Anhui Huagudeng dance. Researcher conduct research on the movement characteristics and cultural connotation of "Gujiazi" through literature research and participatory observation. It found that in the Anhui Huagudeng dance, the “Gujiazi” plays a pivotal role both in movement characteristics and cultural connotation. Movement Characteristics include stable rhythm maintenance, flexible hand techniques such as striking and tapping, and synchronized coordination with dance moves, all contributing to the overall performance. Gujiazi’s dynamic use also expresses various emotions through changes in intensity and tempo. Cultural connotation involves its role in traditional festivals and celebrations, symbolizing joy and enthusiasm for life. Additionally, it fosters community cohesion, represents historical continuity, and embodies auspiciousness and well-wishing, reflecting the rich local heritage and cultural values of Anhui.

Introduction

An introduction to Anhui Huagudeng dance and Gujiazi

Anhui Province is a provincial administrative region in China, located in the Yangtze River Delta region of China, Anhui Province is also one of the important origins of Chinese civilization. The Huai River is a boundary between the geography and climate of southern and northern China. The north of the Huai River belongs to the northern region of China, and the south of the Huai River belongs to the southern region of China. Moreover, the Huai River flows through Huaiyuan County, Fengtai County, Huainan City and Yingshang County in Anhui Province.

People in Huaihe River area of Anhui province are very fond of the arts in their hometown. Dance in Anhui Huagudeng is considered to be a popular and favorite artistic entertainment for them. Anhui Huagudeng belongs to the performing art of Han Chinese music and dance. Anhui Huagudeng is a comprehensive performing art composed of singing, dancing and small operas. Anhui Huagudeng, an important element of Taoist culture, is found in the Huaihe River valley of Anhui Province. The origin and development of Anhui Huagudeng is mainly divided into two stages. The first stage is the origin stage of Anhui Huagudeng. According to documents, Anhui Huagudeng has folklore. Legend has it that during the reign of Emperor Yao in ancient China, floods flooded.

Yu controlled the flood of the Huai River by dredging, and the flood of the Huai River eventually flowed into the East China Sea from its mouth (Sun Chao, 2010). In order to control the flood, Yu said goodbye to his wife on the fourth day of their marriage. On his way to prevent the flood, he passed his home three times. Instead of returning home, he continued to control the floods.

In order to commemorate the Yu couple's spirit of sacrificing personal happiness for the benefit of the people, people built the Yu Wang Temple on Tu Mountain. To this day, every year on the 28th day of the third lunar month, people gather in front of Yuwang Temple to hold the Anhui Flower Drum Lantern event in memory of Yu and his wife.

The second stage is the development of Anhui Huagudeng. During the Tang Dynasty in ancient China, the art form of "Hesheng" developed. "Hesheng" was staged at the Chinese court. The performers improvised some lyrics praising the emperor's achievements. The emperor's ministers and the emperor's concubines were very happy. Later, "Hesheng" spread from the court to the people, and was loved by the rural people and the broad masses of the people. Later, in the Song Dynasty of ancient China, "Hesheng" became more popular among the folk and became a real folk art (Sun Chao, 2010). The characters and roles of "Hesheng" in Song Dynasty are basically the same as those of Anhui Huagudeng. The dance of Anhui Huagudeng is formed on the basis of "Hesheng" after many performances, practices and enrichment (Sun Chao, 2010). Finally, Anhui Huagudeng dance form has not changed from the Song Dynasty in ancient China until today.



Figure 1: Yuwang Temple
Picture source: longmao, August 10, 2024

There are many personas in Anhui Huagudeng dance, for example, "lanhua" and "Gujiazi". Among them, "lanhua" is the name of the female performers in Anhui Huagudeng dance. "Gujiazi" is the name of male dancers in Anhui Huagudeng dance. "Gujiazi" also has different kinds of differences, for example, "Da Gujiazi", "Xiao Gujiazi". Different "Gujiazi" must show different character characteristics, dance movements and dance dynamics in dance performance. For example, "Da Gujiazi" mainly appears in the beginning of dance performance, because "Da Gujiazi" dancers have strong height and physical quality, "Da Gujiazi" will carry female dancers on the shoulders, waist, neck and legs for dance performance. Xiao Gujiazi is a little shorter than Da Gujiazi, but it also has its own advantages. For example, Xiao Gujiazi is flexible in body and humorous in performance style. Xiao Gujiazi will also do a lot of difficult acrobatic skills during her dance performance. In the dance structure of Anhui Huagudeng's solo dance, duo dance, trio dance and group dance, there are also strict regulations on which stage "Da Gujiazi" and "Xiao Gujiazi" should be performed.

To sum up, Anhui Huagudeng originated in the Xia Dynasty in ancient China 4000 years ago. It was formed in ancient China during the Tang Dynasty and the Song Dynasty. Until now, working people and artists have been developing the content and form of Anhui Huagudeng. Anhui Huagudeng carries the wisdom of former and modern working people and artists. The result of this research is not only meaningful for the analysis of the movement characteristics of Anhui Huagudeng, but also for the cultural connotation of "Gujiazi".

Objective

To analysis the movement characteristic and cultural connotation of Gujiazi in Anhui Huagudeng dance.

Methodology

1. Literature research

The researcher conducted a comprehensive literature search using resources such as the website (https://www.baidu.com) Chinese and foreign literature is reviewed, including academic journals, dissertations, books and other relevant materials. The focus is to collect information about the dance of Anhui Huagudeng, and the relevant literature on the movement characteristics and cultural connotation of the Gujiazi in Anhui Huagudeng, so as to expand the knowledge.

2. Participatory observation method

The researcher worked in Anhui Huagudeng's dance career for 17 years. The researcher also studied Anhui Huagudeng for 17 years and taught Anhui Huagudeng dance for 8 years. During the 8-year teaching in Anhui Huagudeng, the researcher has a lot of practice and teaching experience in Anhui Huagudeng dance. During his dance career, he also learned Anhui Huagudeng dance from many artists and national inheritors of Anhui Huagudeng. For example, Mr. Sun Chao, Associate professor of Anhui Art Vocational College, Mr. Zhang higen, national inheritor of China, Ms. Lou Lou, national inheritor of China, and Mr. Chu Xuya, associate professor of Anhui Art Vocational College, etc. In the process of learning and teaching, the researcher studied the relationship between the movement characteristics and cultural connotation of "Gujaizi" in Anhui Huagudeng dance through the method of participatory observation.

Research results

1.1 The Movement characteristics of Gujiazi in Anhui Huagudeng.

In Anhui Huagudeng, the female role is called "Lanhua" and the male role is called "Gujiazi". In Anhui Huagudeng, the female role "Lanhua" can be divided into "Wu Lanhua" and "Wen Lanhua" because of the different division of labor during the performance. "Wu Lanhua" is mainly about dance, and it can also show the technical skills of women in Anhui Huagudeng. "Wen Lanhua" is mainly about singing, but it also has a dance part. Gujiazi, a male role in Anhui Huagudeng, includes three roles: Da Gujiazi, Xiao GuJiazi and Chougu because of the different division of labor during the dance performance in Anhui Huagudeng.



Picture 2: Xiao GuJiazi Movement Form
Image source: long Mao, August 10, 2024



Figure 3: Wu Lanhua Movement Form
Picture source: Long Mao, August 10, 2024

"Da Gujiazi" is a powerful role in Anhui Huagudeng's performance. His main ability is to carry people, and he can carry many people, and even if they carry many people, their state of carrying people is stable. "Da Gujiazi" mainly performs various difficult technical skills. The role of "Xiao Gujiazi" is good at the dance part, which can be well displayed on the stage, whether it is group dance, double dance, three-person dance or the display of technical skills. The dancer of

"Chougu" is good at humorous and witty performances. He is a supporting role in Anhui Huagudeng's performance.

In Anhui huagudeng's dance performance, the vital roles in "Gujiazi" are represented by Anhui Huagudeng's movement characteristics, which are good at expressing emotions. The most important action features and the dynamic features connecting action with action in Anhui Huagdueng are "tilt" and "NingShen". "Tilt" means that the center of gravity of the body is temporarily tilted to one side of the body, and the center of gravity of the body and the feet that support the body from falling to the ground form a state of body fall. This physical state gives the audience a dynamic feeling that the dancer is going to fall but not falling.



Figure 4: "Tilt" and "Ningshen" Movement Form
Picture source: Long Mao, August 10, 2024

"Ningshen" is a movement in which the dancer uses his or her waist and abdomen to turn his or her upper body to the left or right. The rotation of the actor's own upper body is like unscrewing the lid of a soda bottle with little force in daily life. In this "Ningshen" state, the actor's body and the center of gravity of the foot that supports the body from falling to the ground form a kind of reverse pulling force, which is an internal antagonistic force of the body.

There are three movement features of "Tilt" and "Ningshen". The first is that when the dancer's body center of gravity deviates, the dancer pauses a little in the dance action that deviates from the center of gravity, and then the dancer links to the next dance movement (Sun Chao, 2010). The second is that the dancer slowly deviates from his body center of gravity, and when he is about to fall and there is no critical point of falling, the dancer links the next dance movement (Sun Chao, 2010). The third is that the dancer concentrates the dance characteristics of "Tilt" and "Ningshen" on one dance movement, and the dancer's movement is selected from

one of the two movement characteristics of "Tilt" and "Ningshen" and reflected in the dance movement (Chao Sun, 2010).

The dance movements in the role of "Gujiazi" in Anhui Huagudeng's dance contain the movement characteristics of "Tilt" and "Ningshen". For example, these dance movements, such as "Huitou Wangyue", "Shizi Huitou" and "Yejishi", all conform to this movement feature. There are many dances of "Gujiazi" in Anhui Huagudeng like this. The researcher asked artists in Anhui Huagudeng about the roles of "tilt" and "Ningshen" in dance. The artist's name is Sun Chao. Sun Chao said: "About" tilt ", it is the dynamic feeling of dancers' dance movements changing like sculpture of artistic figures. However," Ningshen "is a continuation of dancers' interpretation of characters' emotions. "

The movement characteristics of "Tilt" and "Ningshen" are reflected in the process of the movement transformation between the acting of "Gujiazi" and the movement in Anhui Huagudeng. This kind of movement characteristic can make the actor master the contrast of the center of gravity, the strength and the rhythm in the movement process. If the dancers in Anhui Huagudeng's performance use the action characteristics of "Tilt" and "NingShen", they can well show the role of "Gujiazi", thus reflecting the brave, kind, optimistic and humorous character of "Gujiazi".

1.2 The cultural connotation of Gujiazi in Anhui Huagudeng.

As we all know, China's "Taoist Thought" is the mainstream of local culture in China. Many figures of "Taoist thought" were born in this area of Huaihe River Basin in Anhui Province. For example, "Kang Ji" in the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties in ancient China and "Tuan Chen" in the Northern Song Dynasty in ancient China. At the same time, this area also has a monograph on "Taoist Thought". For example, Laozi, Zhuangzi and Huainanzi. This area gave birth to "Taoist thought" and also developed "Taoist thought".

The founder of Taoist thought, his name is Laozi. He believes that there are four greats in the universe: Tao is great, sky is great, land is great, and human is great. Although man is the spirit of all things, he is the smallest, Tao is the biggest and it is omnipotent. He believes that people should obey sky, land and Tao. He thinks that human follow land, land follow sky, sky follow Tao and Tao follow nature (Sun Chao, 2010). People in this area of Huaihe River Basin in Anhui Province are influenced by "Taoist thought", and artists of Anhui Huagudeng are also deeply influenced by this thought. For example, the artist of Anhui Huagudeng, whose name is Sun Chao, believes that the core of "Taoist thought" is "quieting nature" and "governing by doing nothing", and the highest law in it is "nature". He thinks Tao is great, but Tao should also obey nature, which is the essential meaning of "Tao follow nature".



Figure 5: Laozi, the founder of the Taoist School
Picture source: Long Mao, August 10, 2024

Human follows land, land follow sky, sky follow Tao, Tao follow nature. Researcher believe that the main essential meaning of this sentence is that nature is more important than Tao, and people belong to nature, so people should obey nature. From this perspective, "Taoist thought" embodies the idea of harmony and unity between man and nature. Researchers believe that this is also one of the cores of the content of "Taoist thought".

In Huaiyuan County, one of the spreading places of Anhui Huagudeng, "Yu" is like a god in the local position. On March 28th every year, Anhui Huagudeng is held in front of the Yuwang Temple. This is to commemorate "Yu" and his wife's spirit of sacrificing personal happiness for the ben efit of the people. At the same time, pray that "Yu" can bless himself in good health and avoid disasters in the future. In Fengtai County, one of the spreading places of Anhui Huagudeng, on March 15th every year, people come to the "Cave House of Maoshan Immortals" to pray, hoping that they can get the grace of God, so that people can harvest a lot of food on the land they planted in the future.

In these activities of worshipping gods, people in Huaihe River Basin of Anhui Province will celebrate and express their feelings with their favorite Anhui Huagudeng dance. Among them, the dancers of "Gujiazi" will communicate their feelings with dance movements while holding a dance competition in this dance activity, and at the same time, they will show their love for God with their own dances and dance movements. Respect and their worship of God. The researchers believe that when "Gujiazi" dancers perform Anhui Huagudeng's dance with dance movements, they not only have the idea of entertaining themselves and praying for God to bless themselves, but also inherit and spread the traditional culture of the area where they live. When performing

Anhui Huagudeng dance, the local "Gujiazi" actors and audiences will feel the romantic, optimistic and free feelings generated by the dance movements and dances.

In the special festivals and special scenes in the Huaihe River Basin of Anhui Province, when local "Gujiazi" actors perform dance activities of Anhui Huagudeng, they will tell the beautiful future with their favorite dances. This is consistent with the idea of harmony and unity between man and nature, which is one of the core contents of Taoist thought. The idea of harmony and unity between man and nature, which is one of the core contents of China's mainstream local culture, not only affects the dance movements and dance expressions of "Gujiazi" in Anhui Huagudeng, but also deeply affects people's lifestyle and cultural identity in the Huaihe River basin of Anhui Province.

To sum up, Anhui Huagudeng is a kind of folk dance in China, and its birthplace is many county-level cities in Huaihe River Basin of Anhui Province, China. These county-level cities are Huaiyuan County, Anhui Province, Fengtai County, Anhui Province and Yingshang County, Anhui Province. These areas have different product resources and regional cultures, so that the local people have different dance content and dance action characteristics from other regions and other ethnic groups.

The movement features of "Tilt" and "Ningshen" are embodied in the process of the action transformation between the action of "Gujiazi" and the action in Anhui Huagudeng. This kind of action feature can make the actor master the contrast of the center of gravity, the strength and the rhythm in the movement process. So that dancers show the role of "Gujiazi", so that they embody the brave, kind, optimistic and humorous characters of "Gujiazi".

When a "Gujiazi" actor performs Anhui Huagudeng's dance activities, he will use the dance movements of "Tilting" and "Ningshen" to shape the figures of gods and heroes he worships and the characters he wants to love. The dancer of "Gujiazi" will tell a story with a dance with the characteristics of "Tilting" and "Ningshen", so that he is full of hope for tomorrow. This is consistent with the idea of harmony and unity between man and nature, which is one of the core contents of Taoist thought.

Conclusion

In Anhui Huagudeng Dance, the action characteristics of the role of "Gujiazi" are mainly reflected in the two dynamic characteristics of " Tilt " and "Ningshen". "Tilting" shows that the center of gravity of the body temporarily deviates and gives the audience a feeling that the dancer will fall but not fall, while "Ningshen" involves turning the upper body through waist strength, similar to the action of unscrewing the bottle cap. These two characteristics show the dynamic and emotional expression of the role in the dance, and enhance the expressive force and coherence of the movement through different action connection methods, such as pausing or changing at the critical point. The role of "Gujiazi" shows its brave, kind, optimistic and humorous character through these movement characteristics, which embodies the profound portrayal of the characters' characteristics in the dance of Anhui Huagudeng.

The role of "Gujiazi" in Anhui Huagudeng Dance is deeply influenced by Taoist thought, which embodies the cultural connotation of harmony and unity between man and nature. Taoist thought emphasizes the greatness of nature and people should conform to nature, which is vividly displayed in the dance of "Gujiazi" role. Through the action characteristics of " Tilt " and

"Ningshen", dancers not only show their bravery, kindness, optimism and humor, but also convey their admiration for gods and expectations for a better future in traditional festivals. These movement characteristics help dancers to express their personal feelings, but also continue the harmonious concept of regional traditional culture and Taoist thought, and show the important role of dance in local life and cultural identity.

Chinese and foreign scholars have not analyzed the relationship between Anhui Huagudeng's movement characteristics and cultural connotation. This thesis is about the influence of China's thoughts, culture and traditions on the form of China's local dance. This study is instructive to the relationship between folk dances in China and other countries in the world and the thoughts, cultures and traditions of various countries. It is also of great value to the study of national folk dances in China and other parts of the world.

Discussion

There is a large Anhui Huagudeng study in Chinese journals. Among them, there are few articles on the clear elaboration of Anhui Huagudeng dance's "Gujiazi" movement characteristics and Taoist culture. Anhui Huagudeng is the spiritual product of Huaihe culture, which contains the cultural heritage behind it and sustains the Huaihe people's expectations for life (Li Yan, 2009). Although Li Yan mentioned Anhui Huagudeng to express the people's hope for life, she did not mention that the idea was based on Chinese Taoism.

In Anhui Huagudeng performance, the movements of the male characters are mainly "Tilt" and "Ningshen", which is the most artistic expression (Zeng Fuwen, 2017). In this article, although Zeng Fuwen refers to the "Gujiazi" movement mode, he does not specifically elaborate Anhui Huagudeng's "Gujiazi" movement mode, nor does he Jiazi give examples to clarify that the personality characteristics of "Gujiazi" is reflected in the "Tilt" and "Ningshen" movement modes. Anhui Huagudeng originates from folk life and is naturally close to people's emotions.

"Gujiazi" performance content contains people's thoughts and expectations (Xu Jihong, 2023). In this article, Xu Jihong only believes that the performance content of "Gujiazi" represents people's hopes and aspirations, but Xu Jihong does not understand that the content and form of "Gujiazi" performance, people's hopes and aspirations are closely related to Taoist thought.

This paper specifically expounds the concrete relationship between Anhui Huagudeng's "Gujiazi" movement characteristics and its own cultural connotation. This paper also elaborated the relationship between the content and form of Anhui Huagudeng's dance and Taoism. This paper lays the foundation not only for other researchers to study the links between Taoist culture and Anhui Huagudeng dance, but also for the dances and dance dramas of Anhui Huagudeng on the theme of Taoist culture.

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