

Study on the Cultural Fusion of Minority Dance Accompanied by Music of the Ancient Tea-Horse Road (Tibet-Qiang-Yi Corridor)

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Abstract: “Tibet-Qiang-Yi corridor” is a research on the regional culture of ethnic minorities, and its core area is called “the Ancient Tea-Horse Road”. The dance accompanied by music of Sichuan Tibet- Qiang-Yi corridor is also part of culture and art in the Ancient Tea-Horse Road. It has been widely valued in the music academic circle. This paper firstly introduces the related research results of the culture of the dance accompanied by music in the Ancient Tea-Horse Road (Sichuan Tibet-Qiang-Yi part). Then from the perspective of cultural belief and cultural dimension of the dance accompanied by music, this paper conducts an in-depth discussion, including its formation, religious belief, ethnic cultural symbols, etc. It also interprets its cultural characteristics from the perspective of humanity.

1. Introduction

In a broad sense, the Ancient Tea-Horse Road is a traditional transportation route among places in southwest China such as Yunnan, Sichuan, Tibet, Hunan, Guizhou, and Guangxi provinces and the neighboring provinces such as Gansu, Shaanxi and Ningxia, and some southeast and southern Asian countries such as Myanmar, India, Laos. In terms of geographical scope, it not only covers the historical “Shu-Hindu Road”, “Central Plains-Sichuan-Yunnan Road”, “Sang and Yi Road”, “Yongchang Road”, “Tibet-Yi corridor” and so on, but also includes “the Southwest Silk Road” and part of “the Grassland Silk Road” proposed by scholars. Shen Xu clearly pointed out that “ethnic corridor” is also covered by the Ancient Tea-Horse Road in “On the Ancient Tea-Horse Road in Yunnan-Tibet” and “The Tibet-Yi ethnic corridor and the Ancient Tea-Horse Road”. He pointed out that as for the core areas of the Tibet-Yi ethnic corridor – Yunnan, Tibet and Sichuan, the route formed in history is called the Ancient Tea-Horse Road, which belongs to the category of the southwest silk road. The concept of “Tibet-Yi corridor” was first proposed by the sociologist John King Fairbank. There are mainly Tibetan and Yi ethnic groups living in this area, so it becomes “Tibet-Yi corridor”, which intersects with the Ancient Tea-Horse Road due to many historical factors. In this area, a unique dance accompanied by music culture has been formed, and the study of it has a positive reference to the cultural cause of ethnomusicology.

2. The Analysis on the Cultural Belief of Dance Accompanied by Music in Sichuan “Tibet-Yi Corridor” of the Ancient Tea-Horse Road

2.1 Formation

From the perspective of the development of music history, before Sui and Tang dynasties, Chinese music centered on “dance accompanied by music”. After Song dynasty, with the emergence of opera and talking-singing art, dance accompanied by music gradually lost its mainstream position. However, in the special environment of “Tibet-Qiang-Yi corridor”, the artistic division of minority music and dance was not clear enough, and even most of them were not divided. After Song and Yuan dynasties, the forms of dance accompanied by music in the palaces gradually declined. With the rapid development of folk commerce, there were also many studies on music, which laid the

foundation for the diversified development of traditional music art among the folk. From the perspective of ethnic culture, the traditional music culture in the central plains began to show a trend of ethnic integration, including the fusion development of music types including Han, Hu and Yi. In addition, the hengduan mountains where the “Tibet-Qiang-Yi corridor” is located have also formed the dance accompanied by music forms such as “Qiang Mu”, “Guo Zhuang”, “Sha Lang” music and dance. This kind of dance accompanied by music form has been preserved in many minority mountain areas at present, which has the characteristics of nonlinear and diversified development. The specific forms of dance accompanied by music in different regions are influenced by agricultural production, festivals and religious sacrificial activities, showing different characteristics and having distinct national and social characteristics. Among them, the religious culture has the most significant influence on the dance accompanied by music culture of the Tibet-Yi corridor in Sichuan province, and its manifestation subjects are also the most abundant ^[2].

2.2 The Cultural Belief

The ethnic dance accompanied by music in the Tibet-Qiang-Yi corridor in Sichuan can be divided into religious music and folk music according to the application occasions. But even folk music is influenced by religious culture. For example, “Guo Zhuo” is a circle form of collective singing and dancing. The circle reflects the concept of cause and effect of reincarnation in Tibetan Buddhism and is closely related to the shapes of various instruments in Tibetan Buddhism. From the perspective of social function, religious belief plays an important spiritual guiding role when the local people play roles in the dance accompanied by music. In the whole area of the Tibet-Qiang-Yi corridor in Sichuan, religious belief plays an important role in human society and usually adopts some symbolized forms of dance accompanied by music as the symbolic expression of folk customs. Many of the forms of dance accompanied by music now being performed on the stage actually come from the religious rituals of the local minorities. This is also the embodiment of religious belief and folk culture being closely related. In a specific cultural period, dance accompanied by music also plays a specific role in religious rituals. For example, musical Instruments are usually ritual instruments, while in religious rituals, ritual instruments are deified and have sacred symbolic significance ^[3].

2.3 Role Images

The role images in the dance accompanied by music culture of Tibet-Qiang-Yi corridor in Sichuan are also closely related to the local religious beliefs. For example, “Bi Mo” of Yi is a sacrificial priest and “Su Ni” is a sorcerer. These two roles are important roles in the dance accompanied by music culture inheritance of Tibet-Qiang-Yi corridor. They have the function of killing demons, treating diseases and driving away evil spirits, so they enjoy high prestige among the people. This kind of professional facial makeup is also a major feature of the dance accompanied by music culture in Tibet-Qiang-Yi corridor, which is the product of the actual needs of folk life under the long historical evolution. For example, “Bi Mo” and “Su Ni”, as the priest and the sorcerer, are actually ordinary peasants. In specific religious rituals, they play the roles in the dance accompanied by music, by chanting the classics, singing and dancing, to worship gods and exorcise ghosts, and meet the spiritual needs of other people. For devout disciples, the success of their chanting and dancing performances is an important criterion to determine the effectiveness of their “magic”, which also determines the ability of an ordinary farmer to take up this particular occupation. It is under the influence of this pious religious belief that the Tibet-Qiang-Yi corridor folks formed a fixed standard pattern of dance accompanied by music. It is of a very high artistic appreciation with beautiful singing with musical instruments and dance forms. Such professions as sorcerers and priests are also recognized as musicians and dancers^[4].

2.4 Religious Interpretation

From the above analysis, it can be seen that the formation and development of dance accompanied by music culture in Tibet-Qiang-Yi corridor is closely related to the development of local religions. It is necessary to interpret it from the religious perspective when studying the culture.

In fact, it is not only the Tibet-Qiang-Yi corridor area. Since ancient times, Chinese sacrificial activities have the tradition of performing as dance accompanied by music which also has the dual nature of sacrifice and witchcraft. In a narrow sense, nowadays, the sacrificial activities are part of the superstition culture. For example, sorcerers communicate with gods and spirits through witchcraft to drive away and avoid disasters, or obtain blessings from gods through praying. Especially in Tibet-Qiang-Yi corridor in Sichuan, witchcraft, sacrifice and religion are often closely related, and all of them have an important impact on the development of their dance accompanied by music culture. In terms of the form of dance accompanied by music, under the long-term historical and cultural accumulation, as well as the mutual influence of witchcraft and religion, Tibet-Qiang-Yi corridor in Sichuan has formed the characteristics of dance accompanied by music culture with coexistence of various forms and strong cultural dependence. If the corresponding religious culture content is removed, it is difficult to make a correct understanding of this form of dance accompanied by music culture. This can also reflect the complexity of corridor culture to a certain extent. In the study of corridor culture, it can not only sort out the phenomenon of dance accompanied by music in form, but also generate a profound understanding of minority regional culture through this kind of culture^[5].

3. The Cultural Study on Dance Accompanied by Music in Tibet-Qiang-Yi Corridor of Sichuan Along “the Ancient Tea-Horse Road”

3.1 The Classification

In hengduan mountain area, the distribution of various ethnic groups is very complex, so they have formed more abundant types of dance accompanied by music. There are certain commonalities in its forms. For example, the form of “Guo Zhuang” is called “Guo Zhuo” in Tibetan and “Da Er Ga” in Jiarong Tibetan. The form of “beating and jumping” dance in the yi nationality also has something in common. The basic form of the dance accompanied by music is composed of many people walking on the ground in a circle and singing. Only in different ethnic groups, some dance with songs, others with musical instruments such as the flute.

These minority dances accompanied by music have strong self – entertainment. There are also a wide variety of instruments used in performance. This is because the ethnic minorities living in the Tibet-Yi corridor in Sichuan have similar regional characteristics and common ethnic origin, and many similarities can be found in the form of music. From its musical mode, they all mainly use pentatonic scale, heptachord scale, and the rhythm is short in front and long in back. Techniques such as voice and vibrato are often used. In musical melody aspect, tonal area is relatively narrow, which won't exceed octave basically. The rhythm is relatively free, generally using even beats, which can give more play to the dance. In the end, the form of mass dance takes dominant place and it becomes popular in the folk. According to relevant historical investigation activities, the Diqiang ethnic group living in the northwest area of Tibet-Qiang-Yi corridor in Sichuan province has been an ethnic group that is good at singing and dancing in history. They still keep their typical hand-in-hand circle dance form, which is called “Guo Zhuang” by the Tibetan, Qiang, Yi and other ethnic groups. According to the division of forms of dance accompanied by music, this ancient dance can be traced back to the Stone Age circle dance carved on the pottery basin unearthed in Sun stockaded village. Therefore, although there are different types of dances in Tibet-Yi corridor in Sichuan, there are also obvious basic commonalities. It can be regarded as the basic act of consciousness in the collective activities of human beings, which has exerted influence on people's life, customs and thinking ideas in many aspects since ancient times.

3.2 The Deep Reading

The forms of dance accompanied by music coming down in Tibet-Qiang-Yi corridor in Sichuan have deep historical origins. In the relatively closed geographical characteristics, the performance of many forms of dance is basically the same, and is shared by many ethnic groups. “Guo Zhuang” is a typical example. This kind of circle dance is not only similar in ancient and modern forms, but also

shared by many ethnic groups in the region. Researchers in Sichuan province have pointed out that Guo Zhuang is a traditional form of dance accompanied by music of the local indigenous people, which is deeply loved by all ethnic groups. There are also a “Guo Zhuang” dance called by Tibetan, Yi, Mongolian and Miao in the area of Muli, which is actually the “beating and jumping” dance of Yi on the south bank of the Jinsha river, which is also widely loved by all ethnic groups.

During Xian Feng period of Qing dynasty, song records recorded that during festivals, Yi people would dance “Guo Zhuang”. This dance form in the main ethnic groups of Sichuan Tibet-Yi corridor have a history of more than a thousand years. It is of vigorous vitality, and its dance form is simple and easy to learn, which makes it very easy to spread with a strong self-entertainment. Through this form of folk dance, the aesthetic concept and national psychological characteristics of the local people can be seen. At that time, dance accompanied by music at that time were not only a recreational activity, but also an important means of emotional communication to communicate the feelings of various nationalities and maintain friendly and harmonious relations. Similar to the form of “Guo Zhuang”, the “Sa Lang” dance of Qiang is quite different in functions due to different national cultures. “Sa Lang” is not only used in festivals, but also in funerals, so it is called “Sang Lang for mourning”. In some local minority areas, the elderly who have reached the age of 60 should be celebrated after their death. People celebrate the elderly's lifetime achievements, and express the respect and farewell of future generations in the form of singing and dancing. However, in general, there are similarities and interconnections between many forms of dance accompanied by music and their symbolic meanings in the Tibet-Yi corridor of Sichuan, which is the result of mutual absorption and influence of multi-ethnic groups on each other's cultures in the long process of living together.

3.3 The Humanistic Spirit

The above classification of the dance forms in the Tibet-Qiang-Yi corridor in Sichuan is mainly based on the geographical location of hengduan mountains of that area. From the point of view of its forming process, there are many factors influencing the dance accompanied by music culture of Tibet-Qiang-Yi corridor in Sichuan province. In the process of integrating different national cultures, many distinctive features have been formed. The basic form of the dance is the arm tramping and circling dance, which is related to the dance culture characteristics brought by the migration of the Qiang people. It also reflects the traces of the dance culture of the original indigenous people. The reasons above make the circle dance the basic form of the local folk dance accompanied by music.

This is the phenomenon of the coexistence of individuality and commonality of the dance accompanied by music culture in Tibet-Qiang-Yi corridor in Sichuan. In terms of the inheritance of the dance culture in Tibet-Qiang-Yi corridor in Sichuan, there is the phenomenon of the coexistence of “old Guo Zhuang” and “young Guo Zhuang” in the Tibetan-speaking area. In the Yi language area, there are also coexistence phenomenon of traditional “beating and jumping dance” and “Da Ti dance”. This also reflects the evolution of minority cultures in the new era. Therefore, some researchers also point out that the forms of folk culture are far more inheritable than its own meanings. In the process of watching and participating in folk dance performances, people naturally become an inheritor. Therefore, after thousands of years, this form of folk dance is still passed down. The significance of its dance forms has been eliminated or endowed with new connotations in the process of historical inheritance. Thus, new cultural connotations and humanistic spirits will be derived continuously in the process of its inheritance. For the contemporary inheritance of the dance accompanied by music culture of “Tibet-Qiang-Yi corridor”, it is also necessary to choose the right attitude of inheritance on the basis of mastering the law of its historical changes. This is also in line with the basic idea of “removing the bad and extracting the good” in the inheritance of Chinese traditional culture. The inheritance and evolution of a culture of folk dance accompanied by music is also an expression of the progress of national culture.

3.4 The Characteristics of Its Music Instruments

The study on the cultural aspects of the dance accompanied by music culture in Tibet-Qiang-Yi corridor cannot ignore the characteristics of the musical instruments used in the dance, which has a

profound impact on the development of the dance culture. For example, a common drum made of goatskin is found in the Tibet-Qiang-Yi corridor in Sichuan. The “Qiang Mu” in the Tibetan-speaking areas is called “forehead drum”. The drum used in “Re Ba” is similar. Similar drum instruments are also used in Bi Mo and Su Ni in the Yi language-speaking area. Especially in “Dong Ba” and “Shibi jump god”, the drum is the only accompaniment instrument, known as “Da Ke” or “Ri Mu”. In the process of the sorcerer’s practice, he dances generally with hitting the goat drum. This form of dance performance combines elements of music, dance and drama together. It is a unique artistic expression form of folk dance accompanied by music. It is also known among the Qiang people as the “jump skin drum”. It is mainly a religious dance performed by sorcerers, using drum instruments to create a warm, intense atmosphere.

This kind of object culture reflects the ethnic cultural belief in Tibet-Qiang-Yi corridor of Sichuan province, and also reflects that witchcraft is a core culture in its history, and various witchcraft activities are very common, with the characteristics of sacrificial dance accompanied by music. The core concept of sacrificial dance is that everything has a spirit. Many ethnic minorities living in Tibet-Qiang-Yi corridor in Sichuan believe in the witchcraft religion, and the name of sacrifice is similar. From this point, it can be seen that this area belongs to the same cultural system and has the same characteristics of the dance accompanied by music culture.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, through the study of the inheritance and evolution of the dance accompanied by music culture in Tibet-Qiang-Yi corridor along “the Ancient Tea-Horse Road” in Sichuan, the characteristics of the dance culture can be better understood. In the process of its inheritance, it is greatly influenced by religious belief, and under the influence of long-term co-habitation of many ethnic minorities, it shows obvious characteristics of ethnic cultural fusion. Therefore, it is of great significance to study Tibet-Qiang-Yi corridor in Sichuan as an independent concept for further studying the inheritance of local ethnic culture.

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