



The Application of Ethnic Folk Dance Elements in Choreographic Techniques from a Contemporary Perspective - Exploring the Fusion of Dai Ethnic Folk Dance and Modernity

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Abstract: Chinese dance, rooted in a diverse cultural heritage, encompasses various styles reflecting the traditions of different ethnic groups in China. Among these, Dai Ethnic Folk Dance, originating from the Dai people of southwestern China, is notable for its intricate movements, vibrant costumes, and rhythmic music. As a means of preserving cultural identity and fostering community cohesion, Dai Ethnic Folk Dance plays a significant role in Dai cultural expression, particularly during festive occasions and traditional ceremonies. With China's modernization and globalization, there is a growing interest in blending traditional dance forms with contemporary artistic expressions, presenting an opportunity to revitalize ethnic dance traditions while stimulating creativity in Chinese dance. This research investigates the integration of Dai Ethnic Folk Dance into contemporary choreography, focusing on practitioners' perceptions and approaches to this fusion. Through qualitative interviews with students and teachers from Chinese dance programs at prominent universities, this study explores the implications of incorporating Dai Ethnic Folk Dance into modern dance practices. Findings reveal a shared belief in the potential for blending traditional Dai dance elements with modern choreographic techniques, enriching the Chinese dance landscape and promoting intercultural dialogue. Recommendations include incorporating Dai Ethnic Folk Dance into dance curriculum, fostering interdisciplinary collaborations, and promoting awareness of Dai culture and dance traditions.

Keywords: Dai Ethnic Folk Dance, Chinese Dance, Tradition and Modernity, Choreographic Techniques, Cultural Preservation

I. Introduction

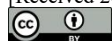
Chinese dance, with its rich cultural heritage, encompasses a diverse array of styles, each reflecting the unique traditions and customs of various ethnic groups within China. Among these, Dai Ethnic Folk Dance stands out as a vibrant expression of Dai culture, characterized by its intricate movements, colorful costumes, and rhythmic music. Originating from the Dai people, who primarily inhabit the Yunnan and Xishuangbanna regions of southwestern China, Dai Ethnic Folk Dance has been passed down through generations as a means of preserving cultural identity and fostering community cohesion^[1]. In recent years, as China undergoes rapid modernization and globalization, there has been an increasing interest in exploring the intersection between traditional dance forms and contemporary artistic expressions. This has led to a growing trend of incorporating ethnic folk dance elements into modern choreographic techniques, thereby creating a fusion of tradition and modernity^[2]. This phenomenon presents a unique opportunity to not only revitalize traditional dance forms but also to stimulate creativity and innovation within the realm of Chinese dance.

The Dai Ethnic Folk Dance encompasses a wide range of dance styles, each characterized by its unique movements, costumes, and musical accompaniment. These dances are often performed during festive occasions, such as the Dai New Year, Water-Sprinkling Festival, and other traditional ceremonies. The dance serves as a medium for the Dai people to express their joy, celebrate their cultural identity, and pay homage to their ancestors.

Against this backdrop, this research paper aims to investigate the application of ethnic folk dance elements in choreographic techniques from a contemporary perspective, with a specific focus on the fusion of Dai Ethnic Folk Dance and modernity. By conducting qualitative interviews with teachers and students from Yunnan University, Dali University, and Kunming University, this study seeks to explore how practitioners perceive and approach the integration of Dai Ethnic Folk Dance into contemporary dance practices. Through an in-depth analysis of their perspectives, experiences, and artistic processes, this research aims to shed light on the dynamic relationship between tradition and innovation in Chinese dance, as well as the potential implications for cultural preservation, artistic development, and cross-cultural exchange.

Objectives of the Study

To examine the perception and understanding of Dai Ethnic Folk Dance among students and teachers of Chinese dance programs at Yunnan University, Dali University, and Kunming University.



To identify the traditional elements of Dai Ethnic Folk Dance that are considered significant by practitioners and explore their potential for integration into contemporary choreographic techniques.

To analyze the implications of the fusion of Dai Ethnic Folk Dance and modernity for Chinese dance as a whole, including its influence on artistic development, cross-cultural exchange, and cultural identity formation.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to deepen our understanding of the intricate relationship between tradition and innovation within Chinese dance, particularly through the lens of Dai Ethnic Folk Dance. By examining the perceptions and experiences of students and teachers from prominent Chinese dance programs, this research illuminates the cultural significance of Dai Ethnic Folk Dance and its potential for integration into contemporary choreographic techniques. Furthermore, by analyzing the implications of this fusion for Chinese dance as a whole, including its impact on artistic development, cross-cultural exchange, and cultural identity formation, this study contributes valuable insights to the fields of dance studies, cultural preservation, and intercultural dialogue.

II. Literature Review

In their study, Li and Zhang (2018) examined the integration of Dai Ethnic Folk Dance with contemporary dance in China. They highlighted the significance of cultural preservation and innovation, emphasizing that the fusion of traditional and modern dance forms can contribute to the revitalization of ethnic dance traditions. Through a series of case studies and interviews with Dai dancers and choreographers, Li and Zhang explored how contemporary choreographic techniques can be applied to Dai Ethnic Folk Dance, creating a harmonious blend of tradition and modernity^[3].

Building on Li and Zhang's research, Wang (2020) focused on the artistic exploration of the Dai Ethnic Folk Dance from a contemporary perspective. Wang highlighted the role of choreographers in adapting traditional dance movements and aesthetics to suit modern sensibilities. By incorporating elements of improvisation, abstraction, and experimentation, Wang argued that contemporary choreographic techniques can enhance the expressiveness and versatility of the Dai Ethnic Folk Dance, making it more appealing to diverse audiences^[4].

In a comparative analysis of ethnic dance fusion, Chen (2019) examined the integration of various ethnic dance forms, including the Dai Ethnic Folk Dance, with contemporary choreography in China. Chen emphasized the importance of understanding the cultural context and symbolic meanings embedded in traditional dance forms when incorporating them into contemporary works^[5]. By maintaining a balance between preserving the authenticity of the ethnic dance and exploring new artistic possibilities, Chen argued that the fusion of traditional and contemporary elements can create dynamic and thought-provoking performances.

Yang (2021) investigated the impact of globalization on the fusion of Dai Ethnic Folk Dance and modern choreography. Drawing on interviews with Dai dancers and choreographers, Yang explored how the exposure to diverse dance forms and cross-cultural collaborations influenced the evolution of Dai Ethnic Folk Dance. The study highlighted the need to maintain a delicate balance between embracing external influences and preserving the core essence of the traditional dance form^[6].

Chou's study sheds light on the transformation of ethnic minority dance performances in contemporary Yunnan, southwest China. Through the lens of Mengbalanaxi, a large-scale ethnic minority dance show in Xishuangbanna, the paper explores the collaboration between capitalist tourism enterprises, regional governments, and art professionals. It argues that this collaboration has led to the transformation of ethnic minority dance spectacles into regional-cultural brands under state and local governmental discourses of cultural industry and regional development^[7].

Y. Jiaying's dissertation examines the interaction between dances, their contexts, and their meanings through a case study of the Peacock Dance originating in Dai culture. The study focuses on four creative factors—individual, community, nationality, and state—that have influenced the evolution of the Peacock Dance from its original form in 1949 to contemporary iterations. The dissertation highlights how these creative factors shape the form, context, and meaning of ethnic-folk dances, using eleven case studies to illustrate the dance's evolution over time^[8]. Heyang, T., Ma, X., & Liang, D. investigate the disparities in the teaching of traditional Dai dance between China and Thailand. Using a quantitative questionnaire survey and qualitative half-section structured interviews, the study explores teaching practices in four units, including universities and song and dance troupes. It finds differences in awareness, concept, and practice of inheritance and development between the two countries, leading to separate developments in teaching and creating Dai traditional dance. The study suggests the need for critical thinking and reflection in teaching Dai traditional dance to conserve cultural heritage effectively^[9].

III. Methodology:

A qualitative approach will be employed to gather rich, detailed insights into the perceptions, understanding, and implications of Dai Ethnic Folk Dance in the context of contemporary Chinese dance. Semi-structured interviews will serve as the primary method of data collection, allowing for in-depth exploration of participants' experiences, perspectives, and practices related to Dai Ethnic Folk Dance.

Participants: The study will involve 20 participants from each of the three selected universities: Yunnan University, Dali University, and Kunming University. A total number of 60 participants are involved to the study. Participants will include both students and teachers enrolled in Chinese dance programs, ensuring a diverse range of perspectives from individuals with varying levels of expertise and experience in dance.

Sampling: Purposive sampling will be utilized to select participants who have direct involvement and interest in Dai Ethnic Folk Dance. Criteria for selection will include active participation in Chinese dance programs, familiarity with Dai culture and dance traditions, and willingness to engage in open and reflective dialogue during the interview process.

Instrument:

Interview Topic	Sample Questions
Participants' Personal Experiences and Backgrounds	a. Can you tell me about your experience with Chinese dance and Dai Ethnic Folk Dance? How did you first become interested in these dance forms? b. What role does dance play in your life, and how has it influenced your personal and professional development?
Perceptions of Cultural Significance and Artistic Value	a. In your opinion, what makes Dai Ethnic Folk Dance culturally significant? How does it contribute to the broader landscape of Chinese dance? b. How do you perceive the artistic value of Dai Ethnic Folk Dance in comparison to other forms of dance within Chinese culture?
Identification of Traditional Elements	a. Could you identify some traditional elements or characteristics of Dai Ethnic Folk Dance that you find particularly significant or unique? b. Which specific movements, music, costumes, or narratives do you believe define Dai Ethnic Folk Dance and distinguish it from other dance forms?
Potential for Integration into Contemporary Choreography	a. Do you see potential for integrating traditional Dai dance elements into contemporary choreography? If so, how might this integration be achieved? b. What challenges or opportunities do you foresee in blending traditional Dai dance elements with modern choreographic techniques?
Implications of Fusing Dai Ethnic Folk Dance and Modernity	a. How do you think the fusion of Dai Ethnic Folk Dance and modernity could impact the development and evolution of Chinese dance as a whole? b. What do you perceive as the potential cultural, artistic, and societal implications of incorporating traditional Dai dance elements into contemporary dance practices?

Data Collection: Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with each participant to explore their perceptions and understanding of Dai Ethnic Folk Dance, as well as their perspectives on its integration into contemporary choreographic techniques. Interviews will be conducted in Mandarin Chinese and will be audio-recorded with participants' consent to ensure accuracy and thorough documentation of responses.

Data Analysis: Thematic analysis will be employed to identify recurring patterns, themes, and insights within the interview data. Transcripts will be systematically coded and analyzed to uncover key themes related to participants' perceptions, experiences, and perspectives on Dai Ethnic Folk Dance and its integration into contemporary dance practices.

Ethical Considerations: Ethical guidelines for research involving human participants will be strictly adhered to throughout the study. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants prior to participation, and measures will be taken to ensure confidentiality, anonymity, and respect for participants' privacy and autonomy.

IV. Findings and Discussion

The findings in this study provided rich and detailed insights into the perceptions, understanding, and implications of Dai Ethnic Folk Dance within the context of contemporary Chinese dance.

4.1 Participants' Personal Experiences and Backgrounds:

The interviews revealed that participants had diverse backgrounds and experiences with Chinese dance and Dai Ethnic Folk Dance. Many participants expressed a deep passion for dance and shared stories of how they were initially drawn to Chinese dance and later developed an interest in Dai Ethnic Folk Dance. Participants discussed the role of dance in their personal and professional lives, highlighting its impact on their personal growth, cultural identity, and artistic development.

4.2 Perceptions of Cultural Significance and Artistic Value:

Participants recognized the cultural significance of Dai Ethnic Folk Dance and its contribution to the broader landscape of Chinese dance. They emphasized that Dai Ethnic Folk Dance serves as a repository of Dai culture, traditions, and history, allowing for the preservation and transmission of their unique heritage. Participants also discussed the artistic value of Dai Ethnic Folk Dance, noting its distinct aesthetics, rhythmic patterns, and emotional expressions. They acknowledged the importance of valuing and respecting the artistic traditions of Dai Ethnic Folk Dance within the context of Chinese dance as a whole.

4.3 Identification of Traditional Elements:

Participants identified various traditional elements that they found particularly significant and unique to Dai Ethnic Folk Dance. These elements included specific movements such as flowing gestures, dynamic footwork, and intricate hand gestures. Participants also highlighted the importance of music, costumes, and narratives in defining Dai Ethnic Folk Dance. They emphasized the use of traditional musical instruments, vibrant costumes adorned with intricate embroidery, and storytelling elements that depict Dai folklore and daily life.

4.4 Potential for Integration into Contemporary Choreography:

Participants expressed a shared belief in the potential for integrating traditional Dai dance elements into contemporary choreography. They recognized that such integration could create a dynamic and innovative dance form that combines the

richness of Dai Ethnic Folk Dance with the expressive possibilities offered by modern choreographic techniques. Participants suggested that the integration could be achieved by exploring the thematic resonance between traditional and contemporary dance, experimenting with movement vocabulary, and incorporating elements of improvisation and abstraction.

4.5 Challenges and Opportunities in Blending Traditional and Modern Techniques:

Participants acknowledged the challenges and opportunities inherent in blending traditional Dai dance elements with modern choreographic techniques. They recognized the importance of maintaining the authenticity and integrity of Dai Ethnic Folk Dance while exploring innovative approaches. Challenges included striking a balance between tradition and innovation, ensuring cultural sensitivity, and addressing potential conflicts between traditional and contemporary aesthetics. However, participants also saw opportunities for cross-cultural collaboration, artistic experimentation, and the creation of new narratives that resonate with contemporary audiences.

4.6 Implications of Fusing Dai Ethnic Folk Dance and Modernity:

Participants discussed the potential impact of fusing Dai Ethnic Folk Dance and modernity on the development and evolution of Chinese dance as a whole. They believed that this fusion could contribute to the revitalization and innovation of Chinese dance, fostering a dynamic and inclusive dance landscape. Participants also identified potential cultural implications, such as promoting intercultural understanding, preserving cultural heritage, and fostering a sense of pride and identity among Dai communities. Additionally, they highlighted the artistic and societal implications, including the potential to attract wider audiences, inspire new generations of dancers, and contribute to the dialogue between tradition and modernity in contemporary society.

V. Implications and Recommendations

It is evident that Dai Ethnic Folk Dance serves as a vital repository of Dai culture, traditions, and history, offering a window into the unique heritage of the Dai people. To ensure the continued transmission and appreciation of Dai dance traditions, it is recommended that dance institutions and organizations actively incorporate Dai Ethnic Folk Dance into their curriculum. Collaborative efforts between Dai cultural experts, choreographers, and dance educators can facilitate the documentation and dissemination of Dai dance traditions through educational initiatives and cultural exchange programs.

As participants emphasized, Dai Ethnic Folk Dance offers a rich tapestry of aesthetic elements, rhythmic patterns, and emotional expressions that can inspire creativity and innovation. Choreographers and dance practitioners are encouraged to explore innovative ways to integrate traditional Dai dance elements into their artistic works. Platforms for interdisciplinary collaboration and artistic exchange should be established to facilitate dialogue between traditional Dai dance practitioners and contemporary choreographers, fostering cross-pollination of ideas and techniques to enrich the Chinese dance landscape.

The implications of fusing Dai Ethnic Folk Dance and modernity extend beyond artistic realms to encompass broader socio-cultural dimensions. The fusion of tradition and modernity in dance holds the potential to promote intercultural understanding and dialogue, fostering appreciation for ethnic diversity and cultural heritage. Cultural festivals, exchange programs, and collaborative performances serve as platforms for showcasing the diversity of Chinese dance traditions, including Dai Ethnic Folk Dance, to broader national and international audiences. Educational initiatives that promote cross-cultural appreciation and awareness of ethnic dance forms should be implemented within academic and community settings, nurturing a culture of inclusivity and respect for cultural diversity.

The recognition of Dai Ethnic Folk Dance as a source of pride and identity underscores its potential to contribute to socio-economic development and community empowerment within Dai communities. Initiatives that support the preservation and revitalization of Dai dance traditions can stimulate cultural tourism, generate income opportunities for local artisans and performers, and strengthen community cohesion and resilience. Cultural heritage conservation projects, supported by government agencies, non-profit organizations, and local stakeholders, play a crucial role in safeguarding intangible cultural assets associated with Dai Ethnic Folk Dance, including music, costumes, and oral traditions. By embracing and promoting the cultural richness of Dai dance traditions while fostering innovation and dialogue, the Chinese dance community can contribute to a vibrant and inclusive cultural landscape that celebrates diversity, creativity, and intercultural exchange.

VI. Conclusion

In conclusion, this research has provided valuable insights into the perceptions, understanding, and implications of Dai Ethnic Folk Dance within the context of contemporary Chinese dance. Through qualitative interviews with students and teachers from prominent Chinese dance programs, we have gained a deeper understanding of the cultural significance, artistic value, and potential for integration of Dai Ethnic Folk Dance into modern choreography. The findings highlight the rich heritage of Dai dance traditions and underscore the importance of preserving and promoting ethnic folk dance forms within the broader landscape of Chinese dance.

The study revealed that Dai Ethnic Folk Dance serves not only as a means of cultural expression and identity preservation but also as a source of artistic inspiration and innovation. Participants expressed a shared belief in the potential for integrating traditional Dai dance elements into contemporary choreography, thereby creating a dynamic fusion of tradition and modernity that enriches the Chinese dance repertoire. Moreover, the implications of fusing Dai Ethnic Folk Dance and modernity extend beyond artistic realms to encompass broader socio-cultural dimensions, including the promotion of intercultural understanding, cultural heritage preservation, and community empowerment.

Moving forward, it is recommended that dance institutions, cultural organizations, and government agencies collaborate to support initiatives that preserve, promote, and innovate upon Dai Ethnic Folk Dance traditions. Educational programs, cultural exchange initiatives, and interdisciplinary collaborations should be encouraged to foster dialogue and collaboration between traditional Dai dance practitioners and contemporary choreographers. Additionally, efforts to raise awareness of Dai culture and dance traditions among both domestic and international audiences are essential for promoting cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue, and mutual respect.

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