

REVIEW

The Contemporary Expression of Chinese Dai Ethnic Dance

La Expresión Contemporánea de la Danza Étnica Dai China

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ABSTRACT

Objective: this paper aims to explore the inheritance and innovation of Dai dance in the context of the new era, particularly through the analysis of its performance practices in specific spatiotemporal fields using Pierre Bourdieu's field theory. The study investigates how Dai dance navigates the challenges it faces in the modern cultural context.

Method: the paper applies Pierre Bourdieu's field theory as the analytical framework, employing literature review and cultural analysis to systematically explore the cultural characteristics, artistic expression, and construction of cultural identity within Dai dance. Furthermore, the study considers the changes in audience demand, highlighting how the dance balances traditional techniques with contemporary innovation.

Results: the study finds that Dai dance faces multiple challenges in the new cultural environment, including a gap in the transmission of traditional skills and the diversification of modern audience demands. However, Dai dance has managed to find a balance between tradition and innovation, preserving its cultural essence while revitalizing through new performance forms and stage designs. This balance has allowed Dai dance to thrive in the process of modernization and gain broader recognition in the context of globalization.

Conclusions: The protection and development of Dai dance should focus on preserving traditional skills while introducing modern innovation. Through the promotion of the cultural industry, the global dissemination of Dai dance can be enhanced, fostering greater recognition and identity on the global stage, and contributing to the strengthening of national confidence and cultural awareness.

Keywords: Dai Dance; Performance Context; New Era.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: este artículo tiene como objetivo explorar la herencia e innovación de la danza Dai en el contexto de la nueva era, particularmente a través del análisis de sus prácticas de rendimiento en campos espaciotemporales específicos utilizando la teoría del campo de Pierre Bourdieu. El estudio investiga cómo la danza Dai navega los desafíos que enfrenta en el contexto cultural moderno.

Método: el artículo aplica la teoría del campo de Pierre Bourdieu como marco analítico, utilizando una revisión bibliográfica y un análisis cultural para explorar sistemáticamente las características culturales, la expresión artística y la construcción de la identidad cultural dentro de la danza Dai. Además, el estudio considera los cambios en la demanda del público, destacando cómo la danza equilibra las técnicas tradicionales con la innovación contemporánea.

Resultados: el estudio encuentra que la danza Dai enfrenta múltiples desafíos en el nuevo entorno cultural, incluyendo una brecha en la transmisión de habilidades tradicionales y la diversificación de las demandas del público moderno. Sin embargo, la danza Dai ha logrado encontrar un equilibrio entre tradición e innovación, preservando su esencia cultural mientras se revitaliza mediante nuevas formas de rendimiento y diseños de escenario. Este equilibrio ha permitido que la danza Dai prospere en el proceso de modernización y gane un mayor reconocimiento en el contexto de la globalización.

Conclusiones: la protección y desarrollo de la danza Dai debe centrarse en preservar las habilidades tradicionales e introducir innovaciones modernas. A través de la promoción de la industria cultural, se puede potenciar la difusión global de la danza Dai, fomentando un mayor reconocimiento e identidad en el escenario mundial, y contribuyendo al fortalecimiento de la confianza nacional y la conciencia cultural.

Palabras clave: Danza Dai; Contexto de Rendimiento; Nueva Era.

INTRODUCTION

With the acceleration of globalization and modernization, the transmission of traditional ethnic cultures is facing unprecedented challenges. In this context, Dai dance, as an important symbol of China's ethnic minority cultures, not only carries the historical memory and cultural values of the Dai people but also showcases ethnic customs while reflecting ethnic confidence and cultural identity. Analyzing the cultural characteristics of Dai dance in the context of the new era has become a significant issue in ethnic culture research. This study aims to explore the performance field of Dai dance and its inheritance in the context of the new era, based on the perspectives of field theory and performance theory. Through the analysis of the performance field of Dai dance, this paper will reveal the cultural characteristics and identity construction of Dai dance in the new era, providing theoretical support and practical guidance for the protection, inheritance, and innovation of Dai dance.

The Performance Field of Dai Dance

The concept of "field" was introduced by Pierre Bourdieu in sociology, referring to a space composed of various positions and social relationships. Bourdieu stated, "I define a field as a network or a structure of objective relations between positions, which are objectively defined."⁽¹⁾ He believes that the field is a social space filled with competition and struggle, where actors engage in position battles and cultural value exchanges through the capital they hold. The performance field of Dai dance is a cultural space involving multiple actors such as dancers, audiences, dance artists, choreographers, and cultural institutions. In this space, dance is not only an artistic expression, but also a carrier of cultural identity and social interaction. Therefore, the performance field of Dai dance is not only a spatiotemporal compound jointly constructed by dancers and audiences but also a dynamic space that carries the cultural memory of the Dai people.

Performance theory focuses on the immediacy and creativity of dance, emphasizing the situational and dynamic nature of performance behavior.⁽²⁾ According to Richard Bauman's analysis, performance theory not only focuses on the transmission of cultural symbols but also on the social interaction and cultural exchange during the performance process.⁽³⁾ In the performance of Dai dance, both performers and audiences participate in the reproduction of culture and the construction of identity, with dance becoming an active site for cultural exchange.

Cultural Characteristics and Identity Construction of Dai Dance

As a medium of ethnic cultural expression, Dai dance profoundly reflects the lifestyle, belief system, and reverence for nature of the Dai people. In the context of the new era, Dai dance not only symbolizes local cultural identity but also serves as an important marker of national confidence and cultural revival. Cultural performance is a form of social practice, and Richard Bauman's performance theory posits that through this practice, individuals and groups continuously construct and reconstruct their cultural identities. Performance provides a platform for cultural identities to emerge, communicate, and negotiate. The form and content of Dai dance are closely tied to the production and daily life of the Dai people. Its movements often imitate natural animals and plants, embodying the philosophical idea of harmonious coexistence between humans and nature. This close relationship with the natural and social environment imparts Dai dance with strong regionality and cultural distinctiveness.

Since the 21st century, Dai dance has undergone dramatic transformations, with the closure of its previous cultural context being broken, bringing both opportunities and challenges. With the introduction of mainstream culture, Dai dance has undergone modification, innovation, and integration, completing a cultural reconstruction that aligns with both artistic and societal changes. As Chinese society modernizes, Dai dance continues to incorporate modern elements into its inheritance, forming a cultural expression that reflects the spirit of the times.

As a cultural symbol, Dai dance carries the historical memory and emotional connections of the Dai people. In the context of globalization and modernization, Dai dance has become an important means of strengthening group identity among the Dai. The transmission of this dance is not only the continuation of traditional culture but also the affirmation of Dai identity. Each performance of Dai dance represents the re-creation of the

cultural spirit of the Dai people and the expression of their cultural confidence. Particularly in modern society, Dai dance has become a vital way to showcase ethnic culture, demonstrating its unique cultural charm and artistic value. In terms of cultural identity, Dai dance serves as both a carrier of the Dai people's group identity and a manifestation of ethnic cultural confidence. The performance of Dai dance in the new era not only preserves ethnic traditions but also shapes and reinforces collective identity. Through an in-depth analysis of Dai dance's performance and creation, it is evident that its cultural connotations have undergone adaptive transformations in response to social changes, resulting in an art form that retains traditional features while aligning with contemporary aesthetics.

Dai Dance in the New Era: Inheritance, Innovation, and Challenges in Spatiotemporal Fields

Pierre Bourdieu asserts, "The nature of a field is determined by its position in the social space, and its nature can be analyzed according to the characteristics of its occupants (or some of them)."⁽⁴⁾ Dance performance is a cultural phenomenon presented by dancers to the audience within specific spatiotemporal fields, shaped by three key elements: dancers, the dance scene (time and space), and the audience. Despite Dai dance achieving significant results in the cultural context of the new era, gradually becoming a symbol of China's cultural diversity and local distinctiveness, it still faces many challenges.⁽⁵⁾ Particularly in the rapidly changing modern society, traditional art forms encounter unprecedented pressure for survival and development. For example, with the advancement of modernization, the transmission of traditional dance techniques and the preservation of cultural memory face severe tests. Dai dance techniques and forms, especially certain traditional movements and dance symbols, rely on mentorship and oral transmission. With societal changes and the weakening recognition of traditional culture among younger generations, traditional dance techniques face discontinuity. The reduction in traditional performance venues and collective cultural activities further exacerbates this issue. In this context, the challenge lies in how to retain the essence of traditional dance while implementing innovation and modernization. This represents not only a challenge for the dance art itself but also a test for how Dai culture adapts to the changes of the new era. Additionally, the critical issue that needs to be addressed is how to integrate traditional culture with contemporary art forms, technology, and audience demands, seeking a balance.

In the increasingly competitive entertainment and cultural industries, the market appeal of Dai dance is limited, particularly among young people and international audiences, with relatively low recognition. The trend of modern cultural popularity and the fast-paced consumption model have marginalized traditional cultural art forms. How to reshape the brand image of Dai dance in the new era's cultural market, and attract a broader audience through innovative performance methods, technological means, and cross-border collaboration, thus enhancing its cultural influence, is a significant challenge for cultural workers. This is not only an artistic creation issue but also involves cultural dissemination, arts education, and marketing, among other aspects. With the rapid development of the cultural industry, the artistic forms and cultural connotations of Dai dance are gradually attracting more attention. Government cultural support policies and encouragement for the inheritance of ethnic cultures have provided favorable conditions for the development of Dai dance. In this context, Dai dance is expected to gain greater dissemination and recognition in the globalized context.

The integration of cross-cultural exchange and the creative industry is a crucial way to promote Dai dance globally. With the strengthening of international cultural cooperation, the unique artistic language of Dai dance can integrate with other cultural forms, break cultural barriers, and become an important vehicle for the transmission of Chinese culture. By combining with contemporary dance art, modern music, and digital technology, Dai dance not only rejuvenates through innovation but also caters to the aesthetic needs of modern audiences, attracting people from various cultural backgrounds. In the context of globalization, Dai dance has the potential to not only become one of the representatives of Chinese ethnic culture but also contribute unique artistic value to the cultural diversity of the world.

Furthermore, through the combination of theory and practice, the modernization and innovation of Dai dance are not only a means of preserving and developing traditional dance art but also a process of re-creating and sublimating its cultural connotations and national spirit.⁽⁶⁾ On the cultural stage of the new era, Dai dance, through diversified artistic expressions, can construct a cultural identity that aligns with contemporary societal values. This not only helps enhance the national confidence of the Dai people but also promotes understanding and inclusivity between different ethnic cultures, advancing the inheritance and innovation of Chinese ethnic culture. In summary, although Dai dance faces multiple challenges in inheritance, commercialization, and cultural innovation, its prospects in the cultural context of the new era remain promising. With government policy support, the development of the cultural industry, and deepened cross-cultural exchanges, Dai dance is expected to rejuvenate in the new era. By balancing innovation with tradition, Dai dance can not only gain greater recognition both domestically and internationally but also contribute to the diversity and uniqueness of Chinese culture in the global cultural context.

CONCLUSIONS

Dai dance, as a rich form of cultural expression, demonstrates unique cultural charm and vitality in the performance field of the new era. Through the perspectives of field theory and performance theory, we gain a deeper understanding of Dai dance's cultural positioning and its inherent logic in the context of the new era. As an important carrier of Dai culture, Dai dance profoundly reflects the historical memory, natural landscapes, and religious beliefs of the Dai people. In the context of the new era, its performance forms, artistic characteristics, and cultural connotations continue to exhibit strong vitality. Through dance, the Dai people not only preserve their ethnic memory but also inject new energy into the cultural confidence of the new era. This is not merely the continuation of a traditional art form but also a significant medium for the construction of cultural identity, social cohesion, and cultural confidence.⁽⁷⁾ In conclusion, the interaction between dancers, the dance scene, and the audience collectively shapes the cultural phenomenon of dance performance. While Dai dance faces challenges in inheritance, commercialization, and cultural innovation in the cultural context of the new era, it also has tremendous development potential. By balancing innovation and inheritance, combining modern dance techniques with audience demands, Dai dance can not only gain more recognition both domestically and internationally but also shine in the global context, contributing to the diversity and uniqueness of Chinese culture.

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