

Contemporary Inheritance and Interpretation of Silk Road Music and Dance Culture in the Tang Dynasty

Chang Liu

School of Education Science, Shaanxi University of Technology, Hanzhong 723000, China

Abstract

The Tang Dynasty was a glorious period in the development of ancient Chinese music and dance, and also the most developed stage of the Silk Road. The strength of the country and the stability of the political situation provided a relatively peaceful space for the development of music and dance art in the Tang Dynasty, and also created conditions for the exchange of music and dance between the Central Plains and the Western Regions. Tang Dynasty Silk Road music and dance exchanges have great significance and value in history, and have profound reference significance in today's context of frequent exchanges between Chinese and foreign arts. Under the vision of "Belt and Road" music and dance culture research, how to pass on and spread China's excellent music and dance culture through the development and promotion of Tang Dynasty music and dance culture, and how to enhance the national unity and promote the cultural and artistic exchanges between our country and the world through the contemporary inheritance and development of music and dance culture are the focuses of the research in this paper.

Keywords

Tang dynasty; the Silk Road; Dance with accompaniment; Culture.

1. Introduction

The Tang Dynasty was an extremely prosperous period in Chinese history. The opening of the Silk Road connected the trade routes between the East and the West, and also brought the possibility of communication for the mutual dissemination and absorption of art. Especially during the Tang Dynasty, a series of measures such as the establishment of post stations and military garrisons in the Western Regions were implemented, further expanding the scope of rule over the region. This greatly facilitated the smooth flow of the Silk Road and the exchange of Chinese and Western cultures, providing a solid foundation for music and dance exchanges between the Central Plains and the Western Regions. This thesis focuses on the music and dance exchange between the Central Plains and the Western Regions during the Tang Dynasty. The powerful Tang Dynasty enjoyed a high reputation in the world at that time, attracting countless foreign ethnic groups and countries to come and learn and exchange. The music and dance culture of the Tang Dynasty was gradually formed and developed through continuous exchanges and interactions with other countries. Among all foreign music and dance, Western region music and dance have the largest proportion and are worth studying. The richness and diversity of Tang music and dance are not only reflected in the inheritance and development of previous generations' music and dance, but also in a positive and subjective consciousness, integrating with music and dance of various ethnic groups at home and abroad, which is the sublimation of foreign music and dance. As an open and inclusive ethnic group similar to the Tang Dynasty, the exchange of music and dance between the Western Regions and the Central Plains is a two-way choice and feedback relationship. Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention to the exchange of music and dance between the Central Plains and the Western Regions. At present, research on the exchange of music and dance between the Central Plains and the

Western Regions in the Tang Dynasty is fragmented and lacks overall coherence, with more micro and less macro aspects, which is not commensurate with the inherent value of Tang Dynasty music and dance exchange. Therefore, further research is needed in terms of depth and breadth.

2. Research Status and Academic Evaluation

2.1. Recent studies on Tang music and dance

On the one hand, regarding the research on Tang music and dance, Prof. Yuan Wo's research has more relevant results, and the two parts of the fourth chapter of his "Course on the History of Ancient Chinese Dance", "The Changes of the Dance in Wei, Jin, and North and South Dynasties" and the fifth chapter, "The Spectacle of Dance in Sui and Tang Dynasty", make me think about The two parts of the book, Chapter 4 "The Transformation of Dance in the Wei, Jin and Northern and Southern Dynasties" and Chapter 5 "The Spectacle of Dance in the Sui and Tang Dynasties", made me think about the ins and outs of the formation of Tang music and dance. From a theoretical point of view, the book provides a detailed delineation of the types, contents, and forms of Tang music and dance, allowing me to further analyze the relationship with foreign music and dance within the framework of a systematic history of ancient Chinese dance. The relevant content of the book is the premise and basis for the selection of the topic of this thesis. The book "History of Chinese Dance" edited by Prof. Yuan He, a key textbook of the "Ma Project", also contains the content of analyzing the specific music and dance programs of the Tang Dynasty, which provides an important reference value for the writing of this paper [1]. Mr. Wang Kefen's "History of Chinese Dance - Sui, Tang and Five Dynasties" introduces the performance dance of Sui and Tang Dynasties in detail, evaluates the specific music and dance works dialectically, and also pays attention to the dance with low popularity at that time. The chapter of the same name in Mr. Xiang Da's book Chang'an and the Civilization of the Western Regions in the Tang Dynasty records the appearance of Chang'an, the ancient capital of the Tang Dynasty, where the hu style was prevalent, and examines the origin of the Li Tang Clan, which provides the basis for this thesis to analyze the reasons for the ruler's love of hu music and hu dance [2]. Mr. Chang Man edited the book "Silk Road and Western Culture and Art" to sort out the eastward graduation of Western dances, musical instruments, music and other arts during the Han and Tang Dynasties [3].

On the other hand, regarding the research on music and dance in the Western Regions, Mr. Huo Xuchu has rich research on the art of Guezi Grottoes, and his book Research on the Art of Guezi conducts an in-depth investigation on music and dance and the art of Guezi Grottoes in the Guezi Region of Xinjiang. Zhong Gao edited the general theory of art in the western region and Wang Rong edited the history of art in the western region is also an important reference monograph for this thesis. These two monographs stand under the perspective of big art, combing the history and culture, civilization opening, change and transformation of the Western Region, analyzing the music and dance of the Western Region in different periods and cultural centers, and filling in the blanks of the art history of the ancient Western Region for a long time. Their views have historical material value and historiographical value. Wang Rong's thesis, "the eastward transmission of music and dance in the western region and its position in the culture of the Central Plains" and "the dissemination of Chinese culture in the western region", and Wang Yancong's "two-way cultural gifts between the Central Plains and the western region during the Han and Tang dynasties", show that the culture of the western region in the exchanges with the Central Plains showed a trend of "eastward gradient" and "westward transmission"[4]. The trend of "eastward gradation" and "westward transmission" in the exchanges between the western culture and the central plains. Yu Taishan edited the General History of the Western Regions from the perspective of political history, analyzing the

important contribution of the Western Regions in the history of cultural exchanges between the East and the West. Zhou Jingbao's *Music Culture of the Silk Road* focuses on the music culture of the Western Regions and analyzes the impact of the Sui and Tang dynasties on the culture of the Central Plains [5].

2.2. Modern Research on the Exchange of Silk Road Music and Dance

Research on the Silk Road music and dance exchanges have many books. Jin Qiu edited "the ancient Silk Road music and dance cultural exchange history" from the land, sea Silk Road exchange of Chinese and foreign music and dance art exchange situation to organize. The *Silk Road Dictionary*, edited by Zhou Weizhou and Ding Jingtai, includes the "words" and "things" on the Silk Road, which is an important tool book about the Silk Road. Mr. Niu Longfei's book "Ancient Music Fajin" for the first time put forward the phenomenon of "teaching back" in the cultural exchanges of music in the western region, breaking the "eastward graduation of music culture in the western region" as a parochial opinion. In addition, the Silk Road along the region of the cave murals, unearthed artifacts have become the object of study of many scholars, for the study of music and dance exchanges for this thesis provides the cultural relics, murals related to the source of evidence. For example: Luo Feng edited "between Hu and Han -" Silk Road "and Northwest history and archaeology", Wang Kefen edited "Dunhuang Grottoes Collection - Dance Volume", Zheng Ruzhong edited "Dunhuang Grottoes Collection - Music Volume", Wang Zichu edited "Chinese music heritage - Xinjiang Volume", Dong Xijiu, Liu Junchong, edited by the "History of the Chinese Dance Art Illustrated Guide" and so on. A number of atlases and books, all for this paper provides important music and dance images of the areas along the Silk Road [6].

In this part of the thesis, some scholars also stand on the two-way perspective of music and dance exchanges to analyze the situation of Chinese and Western exchanges. For example, Zhao Xihui's doctoral dissertation, "Research on Sino-Foreign Artistic Exchanges in the Tang Dynasty," analyzes one by one the art categories imported from several countries, while also focusing on the multiple arts exported to the outside world during the Tang Dynasty. In addition, Liu Yuzhi and Sun Zhenmin, "Eastward Progression and Westward Transmission: A Study of the 'Lion Dance' on the Silk Road A Study of the Phenomenon of Teaching Back", "The Eastward and Westward Gradation of Musical Instruments on the Silk Road" by Japanese scholar Tsuge Genichi, translated by Zhou Weiyi, "The Silk Road and the Westward Transmission of the 'Music' of the Central Plains" by Wang Zijin, "The Silk Road and the Westward Transmission of 'Music' in the Central Plains" by Liu Yong, and "The Westward Transmission of the Sheng from the Images of Music and Dance" by Liu Yong, which analyze the influence of specific music and dance works and musical instruments in the process of spreading [7].

In other areas, Zhan Xiaomei's "Global Space and 'Belt and Road' Research-Cultural Volume", edited by Zhan Xiaomei, explores the reality of the "Belt and Road" initiative as an extension of the traditional longitudinal axis of the "Ancient Silk Road" and explores the human dimension constructed by the "Belt and Road" initiative. The "One Belt, One Road" Initiative builds a community of human destiny. Zhang Boyu "on the significance of the Silk Road music research", Lai Yonghong "Silk Road's cultural connotation and its contemporary value of the analysis", Wei Junhong "Western Silk Road culture characteristics and contemporary value - Xinjiang characteristics of the roots of cultural self-confidence," and other articles believe that the ancient Silk Road as a historical and cultural symbols, nowadays, the "Belt and Road" initiative to build a community of human destiny. The "Belt and Road" initiative continues the cultural heritage of the ancient Silk Road. It is beneficial for this thesis to consider the connection between dance and today's "One Belt, One Road"[8].

2.3. Research on the Compilation and Translation of Ancient Books and Historical Materials

In the passed down literature, the "Music Records of the Sui Dynasty", "Music Records of the Old Tang Dynasty", and "Rites and Music Records of the New Tang Dynasty" provide us with precious and reliable evidence of Yan music in the Sui and Tang court. Cui Lingqin's "Jiaofang Ji" (18), Duan Anjie's "Yuefu Zalu", and Du You's "Tongdian" also provide detailed records of Tang Dynasty dance, music and dance melodies, and musical instruments, providing important historical evidence for the study of the structure of Tang Dynasty music and dance. The "Complete Tang Poetry" and "Music and Dance Materials in the Complete Tang Poetry" record the descriptions of dance works by Tang people and are also important first-hand materials for this paper. In addition, the records in "Tang Huiyao" and "Cefu Yuangui" about the Tang Dynasty accepting tribute from foreign countries and ethnic groups are also important research aspects that cannot be ignored in this paper [9].

3. Contemporary Inheritance and Development of Music and Dance Culture

China's music and dance culture has a long history, and the Tang Dynasty was the heyday of China's music and dance development, which included traditional culture, political system, ritual thought, national art and many other contents. Through the ancient Silk Road, music and dance became the means and carrier of China's Tang Dynasty's foreign political and economic, cultural and artistic, ideological exchanges. Under the vision of "Belt and Road" music and dance culture research, how to pass on and spread the excellent music and dance culture of our country through the development and promotion of music and dance culture in Tang Dynasty, and how to enhance the national unity and promote the cultural and artistic exchanges between our country and the world through the contemporary inheritance and development of the music and dance culture are the focuses of the research in this paper.

Since ancient times, the Chinese nation has been following the culture of commonwealth and "have wanted to reach and reach people", from the ancient Silk Road 2000 years ago, associated with the "common business, common construction, sharing" of the New Silk Road, through the close economic and trade relations, the Chinese culture will take advantage of the situation to win the world's general recognition. The Chinese culture will surely take advantage of the close economic and trade relations to win the universal recognition of the world.

3.1. The Cultural Connotation Reflected in the Silk Road

The formation of cultural exchanges is not only based on the smooth flow of transportation, but also on the attitude of the exchanging countries towards foreign cultures. History shows that the reason why the music and dance of the Tang Dynasty in the central and western regions were able to form a symbiotic relationship of "you have me and I have you" depended in large part on the attitude of tolerance, friendliness, peace, and mutual learning that the central and western regions demonstrated in dealing with the culture of others. The Tang people and the people of the Western Regions did not have the fear of their own culture being violated and rejected, but with an open and tolerant mindset, accepting all foreign novelties, not fearing that the local culture would be swallowed up, and integrating novelties into their own culture. The ancient Silk Road was initially only a trade route, as China was rich in silk, which was used as the main commodity for trade. As the road continued to open up, the Silk Road was no longer just a trade route, but also included cultural interactions and resonance between different regions. The coming and going of the population active in the countries and regions along the Silk Road brought about cultural exchanges, mutual appreciation of civilizations, the formation of different civilizations to recognize each other, understanding and communication of

complementary advantages. From the history of the development of the traditional Silk Road, it drove the development of the node cities along the route, connecting the Central Plains tightly with the cities along the route. Therefore, the Silk Road has also become a cultural symbol of peace, communication, friendship, prosperity and friendliness, which is precisely the cultural connotation embodied by the Silk Road.

The ancient Silk Road conveyed to us the Silk Road spirit of “peace and cooperation, openness and tolerance, mutual learning and mutual appreciation, and mutual benefit and win-win”. Today, more than 2,000 years later, the Belt and Road Initiative proposed by General Secretary Xi Jinping in 2013 is a historical inheritance of the cultural symbols and spiritual connotations of the ancient Silk Road. 2023 marks the 10th anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative. Today, when we look back at the connection between “One Belt, One Road” and “Silk Road”, we should see the cultural value and the path of cultural development in the future. The “Belt and Road” is a time-honored development, an inheritance of the historical “Datang Style”, which blends Chinese and Western cultures and draws on the strengths of all, and a continuation of the cultural heritage of the Ancient Silk Road, which is a historical transcendence that realizes the connection between tradition and reality. The connection between tradition and modernity is reflected in the fact that, on the one hand, the node cities of the Belt and Road Initiative are consistent with the geographical characteristics of the ancient Silk Road, and the core of the Initiative is the cities with special geographic locations, such as Xi'an, Lanzhou, and Urumqi, which are in line with the node cities of the ancient Silk Road. On the other hand, “One Belt, One Road” aims to use the historical symbols of the ancient Silk Road to raise the banner of peaceful development, with a view to building a diversified and integrated community of human destiny. From this, we can see that both in ancient and contemporary times, China has always adhered to the great power pattern of “each beautiful, the beauty of the beautiful, the beauty of others, the beauty of the beautiful and the commonwealth, the world is the same”. “The Belt and Road Initiative, though initiated by China, is a great idea that belongs to the world!

3.2. Tang Dynasty “ancient Silk Road” music and dance culture of foreign exchanges and development

The ancient Silk Road served as a bridge for extensive exchanges between Eastern and Western civilizations, allowing China's music and dance culture to be influenced by various cultures from different regions and countries during the Tang Dynasty. The Silk Road ran through Gansu, becoming an important channel between the central plains and foreign countries, and Dunhuang was undoubtedly the throat of this road. Dunhuang murals show vividly the scenes of music and dance on the Silk Road during the Tang Dynasty between various ethnic groups and countries.

The pipa was a musical instrument introduced to China from the West, and the frequent appearance of pipa-wielding dancers in the murals shows that people at the time had a high demand for music and dance skills, and the pipa dance was a form of performance that demonstrated their mastery of the art. The most famous Dunhuang mural painting of the rebound pipa dance combines dance and pipa techniques in a beautiful and unique way, giving the viewer a great deal of room for imagination.

Drums have a prominent place in traditional Chinese percussion. In addition to boosting morale, drums are often used in banquets, songs and dances, as well as in rituals. Waist drums were introduced from ethnic minority areas, and were used in music pieces such as Xiliang Le, Goryeo Le, and Gaochang Le. Therefore, waist drums are common in Dunhuang sutra paintings in the Tang Dynasty.

Typical image of waist drum painted in Mogao Caves during the Middle Tang Dynasty. The dancer in the center is supported by one leg, with the left thumb cocked and the ten fingers of both hands open, as if he is trying to beat the drum. The long scarf draped over the shoulder

forms a flowing eight-fold flower in the dance, which is fully dynamic. Drumming and dancing, rhythmic, unrestrained, extremely infectious. Until today, the waist drum is still circulating in China's national folk dance.

3.3. Contemporary Inheritance and Research of Tang Dynasty Music and Dance Culture

As a representative of the art of music and dance in China's feudal society, Tang Dynasty music and dance has become the core content of the creation and research of music and dance in China today. Dance artists have created many excellent dance works such as "Silk Road Flowers and Rain", "Dream of Dunhuang", "Thousand Hands of Goddess of Mercy", "Tang Dynasty Music and Dance", etc. In 2000, Prof. Sun Ying led a team to create a "Han-Tang Dynasty" dance system through the study of ancient documents, murals, caves, terracotta figurines, and other historical materials and artifacts. Based on the historical materials of music and dance in Chinese history and culture, Mr. Sun Ying tries to use modern aesthetic thinking to reconstruct a teaching material that has the cultural and morphological features of Chinese classical dance of the Han and Tang dynasties, embodies national characteristics and style, and integrates rhythm, technique and emotion.

The inheritance and research of Tang Dynasty musical dance is of great significance to the development of the discipline of Chinese classical dance. First of all, the inheritance of Tang Dynasty musical dance has choreographic research value. From the cultural relics of Tang Dynasty music and dance, we can see that on the basis of preserving the art form of music and dance of our own people, there is a diversified style of blending and integrating music and dance of other nationalities and foreign countries. This blend of Chinese and foreign art forms is one of the important factors for the survival and development of choreography, dance ethnography and other related disciplines in the world today, and it is the vast soil for the development of the dance discipline in China.

3.4. The social value and inheritance of Tang music and dance culture

Dance, as an art of body language, can break down language barriers and enable people from different regions to communicate quickly and directly. This communication is not verbal, but emotional. In the preface to Mao's poetry, it is said that when words and singing cannot express a person's emotions, then dance should be used. Although dance is a 'silent' art, its charm is precisely because of it. People can express emotions that cannot be expressed in words and resonate through dance. So, even different ethnic groups and borders cannot hinder communication and exchange through dance, because people's perception of emotions, perception of beautiful things, and appreciation of the beauty of dance are consistent. Therefore, dance serves as a bridge that maintains people's emotions in cross-cultural communication. That's why in the Tang Dynasty, a large number of folk dances from the Western Regions were popular in the court and among the people. The Western Regions dance is passionate and free spirited, which is completely different from the charming and gentle Qing and Shang dance styles that have been passed down in the Central Plains during the Tang Dynasty. Therefore, the unrestrained Western Regions dance can quickly infect the Tang people and become an important part of Tang Dynasty music and dance.

From the perspective of the "the Belt and Road" initiative, the prosperity of dance art is an important driving force to promote the development of national soft power. What is 'soft power'? The specific manifestation of a country's soft power is its "culture". Culture encompasses various value connotations such as literature, art, and spirit, and it benefits from the support of hard power such as economy and military. Before the concept of "soft power" emerged, we were accustomed to using hard power, especially economic power, to measure the strength of a nation or country. However, for a country to achieve long-term development and remain

invincible in the world for a long time, relying solely on "hard power" is not enough. It also requires the guarantee and application of "soft power". Let's turn our attention back to the Tang Dynasty. The reason why the Silk Road developed extremely prosperously in the Tang Dynasty was precisely due to the joint operation of the Tang Dynasty's hard power and soft power, which attracted countries and ethnic groups from all directions to pay tribute and accompanied cultural and artistic exchanges. Japan, which is separated from China by a narrow strip of water, sent no less than 13 envoys to China during the Tang Dynasty. Each time, overseas students and learned monks came to China by boat, bringing back various aspects of Tang Dynasty culture such as music and dance art, ritual and music administration, cultural tools, painting and calligraphy to Japan. Today, the treasures and music and dance materials stored in the Masakura Temple in Nara, Japan, represent the cultural relics and music and dance relics of the Tang Dynasty.

Culture is the link between countries and cities along the "the Belt and Road", and an important spiritual achievement to promote the construction of national soft power and show the significance of soft power. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, General Secretary Xi Jinping has mentioned the important contents of "cultural power" and "cultural confidence" on many important occasions. In October 2022, the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China was successfully held, and General Secretary Xi Jinping once again emphasized that the comprehensive construction of a socialist modernized country must adhere to the path of developing socialist culture with Chinese characteristics. General Secretary Xi Jinping's words have pointed out the direction for the development of Chinese cultural construction. The value of the "the Belt and Road" initiative is obvious from the perspective of dance. As an important part of culture, dance art, in promoting the "the Belt and Road" initiative, needs to undertake the historical mission of carrying forward the excellent traditional Chinese culture and telling Chinese stories, highlight the historical culture of the "Silk Road", and expand the contemporary value of the Silk Road spirit. Especially in the current context of Western hegemony led by the United States, facing the trend of international situation and historical development, China should urgently enhance its cultural soft power and international influence, and further grasp its discourse power on the world cultural stage today. The values of eastern countries focus on the collective rather than the individual. Therefore, the promotion of the "the Belt and Road" cultural soft power not only carries the "Tang style" of integrating Chinese and Western cultures, but also the world will feel the excellent value connotation of Chinese traditional culture, and continue to move forward for the early realization of the great goal of cultural community and community of shared future. Therefore, the "the Belt and Road" is not only commercial, but also a means to build world peace. Dance, as a cultural soft power, plays an important role in it

The proposal of "New Silk Road" means that we need to re-interpret Chinese traditional culture, and the perspective of music and dance culture should be gradually removed from the marginalization, which is one of the embodiments of cultural self-awareness and cultural self-confidence. The heritage of Tang music and dance in contemporary times meets the needs of China's cultural, political and economic development, and the traditional culture it carries can feed society through the dissemination of art forms. Returning to tradition and learning from the essence is the value core of the contemporary inheritance of Tang Dynasty music and dance - the re-research and return to the essence of traditional culture. However, the traditional cultural deposits carried by Tang Dynasty music and dance have not been reflected and manifested in the communication and dissemination of the cultural and artistic fields of the New Silk Road as well as in the creation of contemporary literary and artistic works. Nowadays, the collision between the rich minority music and dance resources in the west and the traditional music and dance of the Han and Tang dynasties can produce rich creative materials. Minority music and dance works created around western themes are not only a good inheritance of minority music

and dance culture, reflecting the creativity of ethnic intermingling, but are also closely related to the interests of people in this era. President Xi's two-pronged approach to traditional culture suggests that literary and art workers should carry out creative transformation and innovative development of China's outstanding traditional culture. Works of art have the social functions of edification and spiritual orientation, so the concepts and connotations reflected in works of literature and art have a greater impact on the audience. "Both form and spirit, new with the past" is the artistic thrust of the contemporary heritage of Tang Dynasty music and dance.

4. Summary

To summarize, we can see that both formally and spiritually, our form of Tang Dynasty music and dance is not a superficial restoration, but to create and innovate on the historical accumulation. The contemporary inheritance and development of Tang Dynasty music and dance must include the high-level return and revival of its mother - Tang Dynasty music and dance, That is to say, only by returning to the Tang Dynasty music and dance as the cultural parent, rediscovering its meaning and value, and making a transformation and interpretation in line with the theme of the times, can the contemporary development of China's music and dance be realized. The "New Silk Road" has created a new connection between Chinese and European cultures in contemporary times, and this profound Sino-European dialogue will bring new possibilities to Chinese literature and art, and will also spread China's traditional cultural thinking and humanistic spirit through such traditional artistic performance forms as music and dance.

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