

# A Study on the Acculturation of Traditional Dai Dance in Yunnan Under the Influence of Modern Civilization

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## HOW TO CITE:

Guo Jianbing, Kittikorn Nopudomphan\*, Dharakorn Chandnasaro (2026). A Study on the Acculturation of Traditional Dai Dance in Yunnan Under the Influence of Modern Civilization International Journal of Special Education, 41(20s), 01 - 08

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## ABSTRACT

Against the backdrop of the rapid advancement of modern civilization, traditional ethnic dances are facing the dual challenges of inheritance and transformation. This paper takes traditional Dai dance in Yunnan as the research object, explores the acculturation characteristics, influencing factors and development dilemmas of Dai dance from multiple dimensions through methods such as field investigation, literature research and comparative analysis. The study finds that modern civilization has promoted the innovation of Dai dance in terms of expression form and content, but also led to the loss of some traditional cultural connotations. By sorting out the current situation of acculturation, this paper puts forward targeted suggestions for the inheritance and development of Dai dance, aiming to provide reference for the protection of ethnic traditional culture under the integration of multiple cultures.

**Keywords** Traditional Dai Dance; Modern Civilization; Acculturation; Cultural Inheritance

## 1 Introduction

Yunnan is a province with a high concentration of ethnic minorities in China, and the traditional culture of each ethnic group has formed a unique cultural landscape with its own characteristics after long-term development [1]. Dai dance, as an important part of Dai traditional culture, is closely related to the ethnic's production and life, religious beliefs and festival customs, and carries

the historical memory and cultural genes of the Dai people [2]. In the dance forms such as Peacock Dance and Elephant-foot Drum Dance, there are not only the aesthetic pursuit of the Dai people for nature, but also their understanding of life and the world [3].

With the acceleration of urbanization and the popularization of modern media, modern civilization has penetrated into all aspects of Dai

areas, which has brought profound changes to the survival environment of traditional Dai dance [4]. On the one hand, the communication and integration of multi-cultures have provided new ideas and forms for the creation of Dai dance, making it step out of the ethnic areas and enter a broader stage; on the other hand, the impact of modern civilization has also made some traditional Dai dance skills and cultural connotations on the verge of being lost, and the inheritance subject is also facing the problem of shortage [5]. In this context, it is of great practical significance to study the acculturation of traditional Dai dance, which is not only conducive to clarifying the development context of Dai dance, but also can provide a theoretical basis for the protection and inheritance of ethnic traditional culture.

At present, the research on Dai dance in academic circles mainly focuses on its origin, artistic characteristics and inheritance status, while the research on the acculturation phenomenon under the influence of modern civilization is relatively weak [6]. This paper intends to fill this research gap, analyze the specific performance of the acculturation of Dai dance, explore the internal mechanism of the interaction between modern civilization and traditional Dai dance, and provide new ideas for the sustainable development of Dai dance.

## 2 Methodology

This paper combines qualitative and quantitative research methods to carry out in-depth research on the acculturation of traditional Dai dance in Yunnan, ensuring the comprehensiveness and accuracy of the research results.

### Sub-Section 1: Field Investigation Method

The research team selected typical Dai-inhabited areas in Yunnan, including Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous Prefecture, Dehong Dai and Jingpo Autonomous Prefecture, etc., and conducted field investigations for 3 months. During the investigation, we interviewed 50 inheritors of Dai dance, folk artists and local cultural workers, and observed the performance scenes of traditional and modernized Dai dance,

and recorded the relevant situation in detail through video, audio and text.

### Sub-Section 2: Literature Research Method

We collected and sorted out a large number of literatures related to Dai dance, including academic papers, monographs, local chronicles and cultural heritage reports, etc. By combing the historical evolution and cultural connotation of Dai dance, we laid a theoretical foundation for the analysis of its acculturation phenomenon. At the same time, we also sorted out the research results of ethnic culture acculturation at home and abroad to provide a theoretical framework for this study.

### Sub-Section 3: Comparative Analysis Method

We compared the traditional Dai dance with the modernized Dai dance in terms of performance form, content theme, inheritance mode and audience group. At the same time, we also compared the acculturation status of Dai dance in different regions, to find out the commonalities and differences of the acculturation of Dai dance under the influence of modern civilization, and to explore the key factors affecting its acculturation.

### Sub-Section 4: Statistical Analysis Method

We sorted out the data obtained from the field investigation, and used statistical software to carry out descriptive statistics on the relevant indicators, such as the age structure of Dai dance inheritors, the frequency of traditional dance performances, and the acceptance of modernized Dai dance by different groups, and presented the results in the form of tables, to provide data support for the research conclusion.

## 3 Results

Through the implementation of various research methods, this paper has obtained a series of research results on the acculturation of traditional Dai dance in Yunnan under the influence of modern civilization, which are specifically presented as follows:

1. Changes in the Performance Form of Dai Dance

The traditional Dai dance is mainly performed in religious ceremonies, festivals and folk customs activities, with relatively fixed movements and forms. Under the influence of modern civilization, the performance form of Dai dance has undergone significant changes. As shown in Table 1, the traditional Peacock Dance is mainly performed in temple fairs and Water-Splashing Festival, with solo or small group performances,

and the movements are mainly imitating the posture of peacocks, focusing on the expression of religious connotations; while the modern Peacock Dance has been put on the stage of professional art performances, with the addition of group dance forms, and the movements have been recreated and arranged, and the stage effects such as lighting and costumes have been added to enhance the viewing.

**Table 1: Comparison of Traditional and Modern Performance Forms of Dai Peacock Dance**

| No. | Performance Scene | Performance Form                       | Movement Characteristics                                      | Core Connotation                                                    | Stage Effect                                                      |
|-----|-------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | Traditional       | Temple fairs, Water-Splashing Festival | Solo, small group                                             | Imitate natural simple and primitive                                | peacock's posture, stage setting, relying on natural environment  |
| 2   | Modern            | Professional theaters, galas           | Solo, group dance, cultural integrated with other dance forms | Recreated movements, emphasizing artistic beauty and expressiveness | Professional lighting, customized costumes, background projection |

## 2. Changes in the Inheritance Subject of Dai Dance

The inheritance of traditional Dai dance is mainly based on the way of "master-apprentice inheritance" and "family inheritance", and the inheritors are mostly local folk artists. Under the influence of modern civilization, the composition of the inheritance subject of Dai dance has become diversified. As can be seen from Table 2,

the age of traditional inheritors is mostly over 50 years old, and their cultural level is generally below junior high school, and they inherit dance skills through oral and heart teaching; while modern inheritors include professional dancers, college students and cultural workers, with an average age of under 40 years old and a higher cultural level, and they learn dance through professional training courses and college education.

**Table 2: Comparison of Traditional and Modern Inheritance Subjects of Dai Dance**

| No. | Inheritance Mode | Age of Inheritors | of Cultural Level | Learning Channel | Main Inheritance Content |
|-----|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------------------|
|-----|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------------------|

|   |             |                                                                                                                                                 |
|---|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Traditional | Masterapprentice, Over 50 years Below junior Oral and heart<br>family inheritance old high school teaching from<br>masters or<br>elders         |
| 2 | Modern      | School education, Under 40 years College or Professional<br>professional old above dance schools,<br>training art colleges,<br>training courses |

### 3. Changes in the Audience Group of Dai Dance

The traditional audience of Dai dance is mainly the local Dai people, who watch the dance to participate in religious and folk activities and inherit ethnic culture. Under the influence of modern civilization, the audience group of Dai dance has expanded from local ethnic groups to the whole country and even the world. As shown in Table 3, the traditional audience is over 90% of the local Dai people, and their viewing purpose is mainly to participate in folk customs and religious activities; while the modern audience includes tourists from all over the country, art lovers and foreign audiences, and their viewing purposes are more diverse, including appreciating art, understanding ethnic culture and entertainment.

**Table 3: Comparison of Traditional and Modern Audience Groups of Dai Dance**

| No. | Audience Composition | Regional Distribution                                                                                | Viewing Purpose                                                                      | Proportion of Repeat Viewing                                                 |
|-----|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | Traditional          | Over 90% local Dai people, a small number of surrounding ethnic groups                               | Participate in folk customs activities, religious ceremonies, inherit ethnic culture | High (participate in fixed activities every year)                            |
| 2   | Modern               | Tourists from all over the country(60%), art lovers(25%), foreign audiences (10%), local people (5%) | Appreciate art, understand ethnic culture, entertainment, academic research          | Medium (art lovers and academic researchers have higher repeat viewing rate) |

### 4. Influencing Factors of Dai Dance Acculturation

Through the analysis of the survey data, this paper sorts out the main factors affecting the acculturation of Dai dance, as shown in Table 4. The main positive influencing factors include the

support of local government cultural policies, the promotion of tourism development and the innovation of art workers; the negative influencing factors include the loss of traditional cultural connotations, the shortage of inheritors and the homogenization of dance forms.

**Table 4: Influencing Factors of Acculturation of Traditional Dai Dance**

| No. | Type of Factor | Specific Factors | Impact on Dai Dance Acculturation |
|-----|----------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|
|-----|----------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|

|   |                  |                                        |             |                                                                                                                                  |
|---|------------------|----------------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Positive Factors | Government heritage policies           | cultural    | Provide funding and policy support for the inheritance and innovation of Dai dance, promote the protection of dance heritage     |
| 2 | Positive Factors | Tourism development                    | industry    | Expand the performance platform of Dai dance, increase the popularity of Dai dance, and bring economic benefits to inheritors    |
| 3 | Positive Factors | Innovation of professional art workers |             | Inject new ideas and forms into Dai dance, enhance its artistic and viewing value                                                |
| 4 | Negative Factors | Loss of traditional connotations       | cultural    | The over-modernization of dance leads to the weakening of religious and folk connotations, and the loss of ethnic cultural genes |
| 5 | Negative Factors | Shortage of inheritors                 | traditional | The aging of traditional inheritors and the lack of young successors lead to the loss of some rare dance skills                  |
| 6 | Negative Factors | Homogenization of forms                | of dance    | The modernized Dai dance is similar to other stage dances, losing its unique ethnic characteristics                              |

#### 5. Regional Differences in Acculturation of Dai Dance

The acculturation degree of Dai dance in different regions of Yunnan is also different due to the differences in geographical location, economic development level and cultural communication frequency. As shown in Table 5,

the acculturation degree of Dai dance in Xishuangbanna, which has a high degree of tourism development, is relatively high, and the modernization of dance forms is obvious; while the acculturation degree of Dai dance in some remote mountainous areas is relatively low, and the traditional style is preserved more completely.

Table 5: Regional Differences in Acculturation of Traditional Dai Dance in Yunnan

| No. | Region                       | Tourism Development Level         | Acculturation Degree | Characteristics of Dai Dance                       |
|-----|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous | High (famous tourist destination) | High                 | Strong stage performance, rich in modern elements, |

|   |                                                               |                                      |        |                                                                                                                                                |
|---|---------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|   | Prefecture                                                    |                                      |        | widely spread, but part of traditional connotations are lost                                                                                   |
| 2 | Dehong Dai and Jingpo Autonomous Prefecture                   | Medium (developing tourism industry) | Medium | Balance between traditional and modern, retain more folk connotations, and carry out appropriate stage innovation                              |
| 3 | Remote mountainous Dai areas (such as some villages in Pu'er) | Low (less developed tourism)         | Low    | Basically retain traditional performance forms and cultural connotations, but the popularity is low and the inheritance is facing difficulties |

## 6. Changes in the Cultural Connotation of Dai Dance

In addition to the above aspects, the cultural connotation of Dai dance has also changed under the influence of modern civilization. The traditional Dai dance is closely connected with Buddhism and agricultural civilization, and the connotation is mostly related to praying for good weather, bumper harvest and peace; the modern Dai dance has added the themes of ethnic unity, ecological protection and rural revitalization, expanding the cultural connotation of dance and making it more in line with the needs of the times.

## 4 Conclusion And Future Work

### 1. Conclusion

This study shows that under the influence of modern civilization, the traditional Dai dance in Yunnan has undergone obvious acculturation, which is reflected in the diversification of performance forms, the expansion of inheritance subjects, the expansion of audience groups, and the enrichment of cultural connotations. The acculturation of Dai dance is a double-edged sword: on the one hand, it promotes the innovation and spread of Dai dance, makes it adapt to the development of the times, and enhances its influence; on the other hand, it also brings problems such as the loss of traditional cultural connotations and the homogenization of

forms, which threaten the inheritance of Dai dance's ethnic characteristics.

The regional differences in the acculturation of Dai dance are closely related to the local tourism development level and cultural communication frequency. The higher the degree of tourism development, the more obvious the modernization of Dai dance, and the more prominent the problem of cultural connotation loss; while the traditional style of Dai dance in remote areas is preserved better, but it faces the dilemma of insufficient inheritance and development momentum.

### 2. Future Work

In view of the current situation of the acculturation of Dai dance, the following suggestions are put forward for its future inheritance and development:

Strengthen the protection of traditional cultural connotations: On the basis of sorting out the traditional cultural connotations of Dai dance, establish a protection mechanism for dance heritage, and avoid the loss of ethnic cultural genes in the process of modernization.

Optimize the inheritance system: Combine the traditional master-apprentice inheritance with school education, set up Dai dance courses in colleges and universities and local schools, and

cultivate a group of inheritors who understand both traditional culture and modern art.

Promote the integrated development of culture and tourism: In the development of tourism, avoid the overcommercialization and homogenization of Dai dance, and realize the organic combination of the inheritance of traditional culture and the development of tourism.

Encourage targeted innovation: Guide professional art workers to carry out innovative creation on the premise of respecting traditional

culture, inject new era elements into Dai dance, and enhance its vitality and influence.

In the future, the research can further expand the research scope, carry out long-term tracking research on the acculturation of Dai dance, and explore the dynamic evolution mechanism of Dai dance under the interaction of multiple cultures. At the same time, it can also carry out comparative research with the acculturation of other ethnic dances in Yunnan to provide a more comprehensive reference for the protection of ethnic traditional culture.

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