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## The Current Situation, Reflection and Countermeasures of the Development of Lingnan Folk Dance from the Perspective of Cultural Ecology

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### Abstract

With the advancement of globalization and modernization, the cultural ecology of Lingnan folk dance has two aspects: field inheritance and stage creation. From the perspective of cultural ecology, we sort out the development status of the two, reflect on the existing modernity issues, conclude the essential reasons for the loss of cultural subjectivity and the break of the cultural ecological chain, and propose the concept of community development and the development strategy of keeping integrity and innovation in action, and provide a basis for It provides an effective reference for the development of Lingnan folk dance.

**Keywords:** Cultural ecology, Lingnan folk dance

### Introduction

Cultural ecology was proposed by Julian Steward, which is a theory that studies cultural phenomena with the help of the concepts, principles and methods of ecology. Steward's book *Theory of Culture Change* (1955) marked the formal birth of cultural ecology, a discipline for the study of the interdependence and balance between a specific ecological environment and culture (J.H.Steward, Yu Wenhua, 1988). In the 1960s, R. Neiting, R. Rappaport and J. Bennett continued relevant research. In the 1970s, Harris proposed "cultural materialism". After the 1980s, this theory expanded to the world and multiple disciplines (Xu Jian, 2010). Based on the theory of cultural ecology, dance ecology and modernity criticism, this paper sorted out the development status of Lingnan folk dance, constructed an ecological concept and mechanism of intertextual symbiosis and complementary functions, and strived to achieve sustainable cultural development in the future.



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"Lingnan" (south of the Five Ridges) is a geographical and cultural concept that has been preserved since ancient times, and "Guangdong" is an administrative division concept. Lingnan and Guangdong are mutually inclusive. In other words, the dance phenomenon of Guangdong is a typical representative of Lingnan dance. According to the actual situation, the Lingnan folk dance discussed in this paper refers to the folk dance of Guangdong.

### Objectives

1. To study the development status of Lingnan folk dance in field inheritance and stage performance creation.
2. To analyze the development dilemma of Lingnan folk dance in field inheritance and stage performance creation.
3. To construct a development strategy of Lingnan folk dance in field inheritance and stage performance creation.

### Research Scope

#### 1. Population

The population of this study includes folk artists, choreographers, scholars and experts related to Lingnan folk dance.

#### 2. Scope of research variable range

The research variables are based on the existence field and social function of Lingnan folk dance, including field inheritance and stage dance creation.

#### 3. Timing scope

The research period starts from 2000 and ends in 2023.

### Research Methodology

#### 1. Research Methods

The research uses fieldwork to understand the inheritance of folk artists and dance; uses document analysis to understand the cultural connotations and historical context of different dance types; and uses observation to analyze the creation and performance of folk dances and the techniques used by choreographers.

#### 2. Data collection

The research collects interview data through audio and video recording; the relevant data collected in libraries, China National Knowledge Infrastructure, and through surveys by researchers serve as the data basis.



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### 3. Data analysis

The researcher conducted qualitative analysis of the data and invited authoritative scholars to conduct data verification, including the authenticity of the data, the validity of the analysis and the innovativeness of the results.

#### Research results

##### 1. The development status of Lingnan folk dance

Lingnan has been an important window connecting the world trade since ancient times. Internally, it has been the core area for the southward migration of Central Plain Culture, and it has also been the vanguard of China's reform and opening up in modern times. As a result, Lingnan folk dance is often in a situation of complicated internal structure and turbulent external context. At present, the overall rise and fall of Lingnan folk dance is affected by many fields such as field inheritance and stage performance creation.

###### 1) Current status of field inheritance

Lingnan folk dance inherited in the fields is the meta-gene of cultural development, and its survival is directly related to other areas of the ecosystem. In 2009, the Guangdong Cultural Center conducted a general investigation of 403 traditional dances, showing that 214 of them were endangered or lost (Li Yongxiang & Zeng Huamei, 2016). As of 2022, the official website of Guangzhou Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Center has successively promoted 98 types of intangible cultural heritage dances at the provincial level and above, and also pointed out that the survival situation of each dance type is gradually declining. From the perspective of dances, economic entities such as shopping malls and factories have occupied the performance venues of dance in traditional communities, forcing them to live in parks, squares and tourist attractions. Especially for dance types related to nature worship or farming culture, their connotations, forms and functions have changed with the changes in the cultural field. From the perspective of inheritance groups, the economically underdeveloped areas of Guangdong Province have richer cultural diversity. However, as the older generation of artists gradually withdraw from the stage of history, the younger generation left their hometowns in pursuit of a better life, resulting in the common phenomenon of the loss of their skills with the death of people and, and no successors. In fact, it is human nature to inherit groups to downplay their adherence to tradition when weighing the survival of dance and individual interests. It is also a modern consequence of the globalization of most traditional arts.



The 16<sup>th</sup> National and International Conference  
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2) Current status of stage performance creation

Stage performance creation is an indispensable form of cultural innovation and dissemination of Lingnan folk dance, and plays a central role in regional cultural modeling. Competitions in the Guangdong Art Festival and the Guangdong Mass Music and Dance Flower Fair are important platforms for incubation and performance creation. According to the program list of the 1st to 7th Lingnan Dance Competition, there were 58 works in the first competition. Since then, there have been an average of 60-90 works in each competition. As of the closing of the 7th competition in 2021, there will be a total of more than 500 works. As of the closing of the 7th competition in 2021, there were a total of more than 500 stage works. The popularity of performance creation can be attributed to the solid material foundation provided by the regional market economy. A large number of professional choreographers have gathered in the Guangdong dance scene and have deeply cultivated local culture through performance creation. However, the phenomenon of convergence of dance forms and unidirectional ecological development also appeared in this grand occasion. Some choreographers regarded traditional dance movements as materials or symbols, excessively implanted modern dance techniques, and filled them in using deconstruction, collage and other techniques to fill in, so that homogenized and westernized stage works can be found anywhere. In addition, most of the performance creation processes have failed to promote the living survival of native dance types, showing a one-dimensional development trend. For example, in previous Lingnan Dance Competitions, there were excellent works based on "money throwing drums" such as *Listening to the Drum*, *Impression of Money Throwing Drums*, *Embroidered Figures and Beauty*, and *Cantonese Embroidery and Beauty*, but the goal of the performance creation focuses on satisfying the aesthetic needs of external audiences rather than the survival of the dance itself. Therefore, the ecological amplitude of "money throwing drums" were gradually weaken from a position of strength, so that the subsequent choreographers can only "break through in the performance creation".

**2. Reflection on the development of Lingnan folk dance**

At present, the development of Lingnan folk dance has entered the post-globalization era. When making leap-forward achievements in various fields, scholars need to clarify the ecological structural relationships in each field at the macro level and constantly reflect on the modern problems existing in each field at the micro level.

1) Changes in field inheritance

The decline of field inheritance was caused by force majeure objective factors such as environmental changes, and also by human factors of being squeezed by dominant



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cultural and authoritative groups. In the process of cultural inheritance, the rejection concept of the older generation of artists has caused folk dance to remain in a relatively closed state for a long time. Its own cultural value has gradually become difficult to adapt to the needs of modern social development, and the cultural vision of the younger generation has naturally shifted. When traditional dance culture met other cultures, it failed to have an equal dialogue. Especially when Western culture strongly occupied the public's attention, and forced people to compare the advantages and disadvantages between cultures while boasting its own advanced nature, the people were trapped in the choice of local and foreign cultures, advanced and backward cultures. In the interactions between internal and external groups, external authorities often reviewed folk dances as experts. Some condescending ideas and actions will make the internal group "under trial" succumb to the authority, generate self-doubt, and passively change its cultural attributes and dance forms, which also intensifies the group's self-defensive closed state.

The historical experience of the development of folk-dance shows that natural dance carrying local knowledge can be seen like the "root", while any other dance that is out of place is the "leaf", and there is a causal relationship between the roots and leaves of progressive development. The continuous decline of field inheritance will inevitably lead to the decline of other fields. This is not only because natural dance is the foundation of cultural events and human creation of dance art (Zi Huajun & Wang Ning, 2012), but also because the living survival is the basic nature and practical need of folk dance. In the final analysis, there are value differences between internal and external groups, and the interests and appeals of multiple actors cannot be balanced, leading to the dissolution of local knowledge and changes in dance forms.

2) Variations in stage performance creation

Dance performance creation is an artistic production activity centering on choreographers, which is highly individual and predetermined, and not completely governed by local knowledge. After collecting certain traditional movements or cultural symbols, some choreographers over-relied on choreographic techniques for processing, and excessively implanted modern dance techniques into their creations. Since different folk-dance forms are deconstructed by the same techniques, the choreographer uses the aesthetics learned in professional schools as a unified standard, resulting in only sporadic movement differences in the works, but the deeper connotation and aesthetics are becoming more and more similar. Those folk-dance works which have been dismembered by Western techniques and aesthetics have broken away from the essence of traditional culture and lost the subjectivity and





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consciously establish their identity and self-confidence in Lingnan folk dance culture, so that the cultural subjectivity could return to its place.

Establish a cultural development community in which people unite with each other. The intersubjective cultural communication model proposed by Husserl in the 20th century was a concentrated reflection of human well-being and cultural ultimate concern (Zhang Yinghua, 2012). It denied the "solipsistic epistemology", but advocated the values of mutual respect and mutual subject, which was conducive to equal communication among various groups. For example, if the choreographers ceded the speaking right in the communication with folk artists and strengthened the humanistic care for the ontology, it would be extremely beneficial to the development of both parties.

2) Action strategies for development

Folk dance inherited in the fields is the meta-gene of cultural development. Folk artists must not only maintain the inheritance of local knowledge and prevent cultural gene variations, but also actively integrate into the development of modern society with a relatively open mind and dynamically expand the channels for the inheritance and spread of dance types. External groups need to seek a balance between economy and culture, especially in the development of cultural industrialization to avoid obliterating the essential attributes of culture.

Folk dance performance creation is a cultural reproduction activity on the basis of maintaining cultural subjectivity. Any dance that is included in the category of Chinese folk dance cannot be separated from its origin regardless of the ever-changing, and it must not lose its nature, no matter how varied it is (Liu Qingyi, 2001). Directors cannot regard the creation and performance of folk dance as a utilitarian act, only to achieve personal goals without considering the survival of traditional dance. They must pay attention to the precious cultural value of folk dance. Therefore, choreographers need to strengthen dance ecological awareness, enhance their national cultural consciousness, enrich their national cultural literacy, thereby optimizing the quality of national dance creation (Zi Huajun, Wang Ning, 2012).

**Discussion**

After sorting out the development status of Lingnan folk dance in general, clarifying the relationship between its ecological structure, and revealing the essence of its modernity problems, groups in various fields should clarify their important functions in the cultural ecosystem, especially authorities have the responsibility to constantly reflect and criticize themselves. In the final analysis, the integrity and innovation of Lingnan folk dance requires



The 16<sup>th</sup> National and International Conference  
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20 March, 2024

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mutual complement, effective dependence, mutual benefit and common development among all parties, so that it can participate in the global cultural competition more effectively.

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