

新中国艺术史

新中国舞蹈史

A HISTORY
OF
CHINESE
DANCE:1949-2000

冯双白 著 湖南美术出版社

这是一部从宏观角度描述1949—2000年新中国舞蹈艺术发展轨迹的著作。本书以具体的、重大的舞蹈历史事件为线索，串联起新中国舞蹈曲折、起伏的历史发展进程。为新中国舞蹈发展勾勒出一个基本面貌。作者历经多年潜心研究，为读者提供了许多非常宝贵的历史文献资料，具有很好的实用参考价值。相信读者一定能从本书中获得自己所需要的帮助。

(1949—2000)



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导言

冯双白

新中国舞蹈的历史，是中华民族舞蹈史上最富于创造性的历史。它以自己精彩纷呈的历史面貌和极其丰富的艺术创作收获，表现了巨大的历史进步意义。当许许多多舞蹈新作品和舞蹈艺术家一起凸现在我们回眸的眼光下，当我们将20世纪中叶之后的中国舞蹈归纳在一起集中反思的时候，才能更加深切地体会到什么是人类文化那不可消亡的前进动力，什么是人类文明积极进取的伟大精神。不管舞蹈艺术在其风格传衍上有着怎样的历史惯性，不管这五十二年间发生过怎样的曲折和迂回，但历史螺旋性发展的总体图式却在这门艺术的历史趋势、艺术品位、创作方法、风华人物和历史事件的更迭中体现出来。

本书仅梳理新中国舞蹈的历史脉络，关注那些对于舞蹈历史变革有重大影响的人物、作品或事件，也对艺术成就卓著者给予一定的观照。既然我们记载于此的历史不可能是过往历史的时空复现，那么，本书必当有所扬弃。一些人和事情将被我们详加叙述，一些人和事情将一笔带过，而有些人和事则不得不移出我们的视线之外。如此取舍的理由在于我们关注新中国舞蹈史的参照系或曰历史坐标，即：新中国舞蹈史既是整个中国舞蹈历史发展的一个延伸，又是20世纪中国舞蹈历史的发扬光大。笔者在本人所著的《中国现当代舞蹈史纲》中

舞蹈纹彩陶盆 青海同德县边沟乡宗日遗址出土



曾经说,我们对于舞蹈历史的关注,“主要是以整个中国舞蹈艺术发展历史为背景的简略巡视,希望在一个历史性的比较中找到中国现当代舞蹈历史发展的某些带有规律性、本质性的东西”;我们观察和研究历史的目的,“不求成为一本全方位的历史叙述,而是更加重视在近百年中是怎样的一些史实给这一段舞蹈进程打上了不可磨灭的个性印记,又是怎样的一些变化给这一段舞蹈发展镌刻出特殊的文化纹样,也正是这些史实和变化构成了近百年中国舞蹈发展的灵魂。”

1. 新中国舞蹈是传统中国舞蹈的合理延伸

我们之所以说新中国舞蹈史是整个中国传统舞蹈发展的一个合理延伸,是因为中国舞蹈与华夏文明一样有着至少五千年的悠久传统,拥有着多元而灿烂的民族舞蹈文化样式,拥有着众多的著名舞蹈艺术家和作品。当中国舞蹈在沿着自己的历史轨迹一路走向20世纪时,它的身后是一个巨大的传统,或者说它是一个巨大体系的产物。因为其体系庞大且时日持久,所以新中国舞蹈不可避免地受到它的深刻影响。

舞蹈,在中国历史上有过辉煌的时代,也有过低落沉寂的时候,辉煌与沉潜里,形成了独特传统。这一传统既是精神的,又固化为特定的动作仪式。如社会信仰中的祭祀之舞,大业告成时的功成作乐,皇宫巍峨大殿里的歌舞娱乐,都是整个中国舞

蹈传统的一部分。这是中国舞蹈历史长河中一条彰显的河流大系。在民间,舞蹈是敬神酬神的民俗仪式之一,也是普通百姓的对自己艰苦岁月的酬谢。这些民间的“玩艺”原本是不入流的,也较少被载入历代中国史册,典籍中多多记载的,是舞蹈与皇朝重大事件的结合。然而,由于民间舞蹈与普通社会民众的日常心理有着极其密切的联系,因此从舞蹈观风俗、知世情、察民怨、传教化,成为儒家乐舞观中特别能够让统治者感兴趣的观念。历代统治者信奉这一点,所以“声乐之入人也深,其化人也速”^①,“故乐行二伦清,耳目聪明,血气平和,移风易俗,天下皆宁”^②。民间乐舞因此受到重视,不但被统治者用以观察“民风”和“民俗”以知政治统治的状态,也常常被“采集”出来送入宫廷,改其粗陋之形,灌以宫廷的雅致和精美,让宫中的艺伎们学习和演出,成为统治者赏心悦目的舞蹈表演。

于是,我们看见了一条中国宫廷舞蹈传统成形的线路图:民间舞蹈——“采风”入宫——改形“纳用”——女乐艺术。

当然,宫廷舞蹈中还有一个很重要的组成部分,即宫廷雅乐体系。那是起源于周代宫廷的一种体系,完善于汉唐,持续到清代。民国革命的烽火烧尽了宫廷雅乐的旌旗高幡,宫廷雅乐在20世纪初期已经随着封建王朝之大厦倾倒而陡然消失。但在山东曲阜孔庙和北京国子监旁的孔子像前,祭孔乐舞却一直保持着雅乐乐舞的某种样式,保留着雅乐的隆重和庄严。宫廷的雅乐体系和女乐体系,构成了中国宫廷舞蹈艺术的主要内容。

新中国舞蹈,当然不是从中国宫廷舞蹈发展而来的,它甚至是对于这一传统的反叛。然而,宫廷历史传统的影响对于中国舞蹈艺术的发展从某些方面说是潜移默化的。特别是其中“功成作乐”和“女乐”的部分曾经那样长久地影响了中国人对于“舞蹈”这两个字的看法,因此也就不可能不对新中国舞蹈艺术产生内在的作用。

汉代宫廷中的自娱之乐:以舞相属 四川彭县画像石



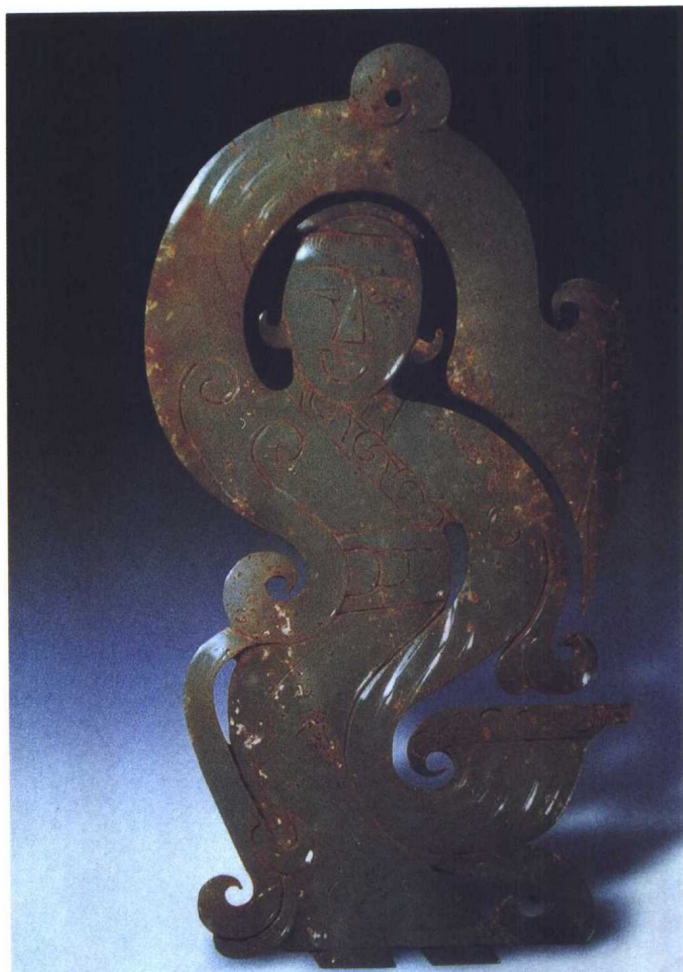
在中国宫廷舞蹈之外，另外一条重要的、生生不灭的大河支系，就是华夏各族的民间舞蹈。如上所述，民间舞蹈常常被采集“入宫”，当作王公贵戚们的赏玩之物。但是，华夏各民族的民间舞蹈艺术却不因为受到某种“宠幸”就忘情于宫廷，而是保持着自己生龙活虎的性格，在民族土壤上自在生长。华夏各民族的民间舞蹈，其实是中国传统舞蹈中的精华。早在汉魏时期，民间舞就已经显露出它活泼而顽强的生命活力。经过南北朝时期各民族大迁徙、大融合之后，各民族的乐舞艺术交叉融会，形成了隋唐时代中国乐舞艺术的第一个高峰。随后，在宋代，中国各民族的民间舞蹈，特别是汉族民间舞蹈已经具备了基本的样式和精神指向，那就是以

农历新年为主要时机，以酬谢天神和土地为内容，既娱神又娱人的民间动作表演。民间舞蹈往往与特定的民族礼仪形式结合在一起，与特定的民族风俗习惯结合在一起，更与特定的民族社会生活中所形成的民族性格和气质融入在一起，成为特定民族文化的精神表征。中国各民族的民间舞蹈有着千差万别的“容貌”，在千百年的历练中形成了各自的“品性”，即长久的、稳固不变的艺术风格。傣族舞蹈温和中的柔韧，蒙古族舞蹈随兴中的粗犷，新疆维吾尔族舞蹈持重中的放情，都是那一民族延续数代的艺术性格。这样的性格并不因为中国历史王朝的兴衰更替而变化，相反，它却成为一个又一个世代的见证。

反弹琵琶舞 敦煌莫高窟112窟南壁观无量寿经变



白玉雕舞女玉佩 战国出土



新中国舞蹈，当然受到民间舞蹈传统的深刻影响。

无论如何，新中国舞蹈史都是在上述舞蹈传统中衍生出来的。近五十年来的中国舞蹈发展史上，一个基本的命题就是如何从传统中走出新路，传统与现代的问题，几乎体现在新中国舞蹈史的所有方面。

2. 新中国舞蹈是20世纪文化革新精神的逻辑推进

我们认为，新中国舞蹈史是20世纪中国社会演进历程中文化革新精神的发扬光大。怎样看待这个问题呢？

中国舞蹈在整个世界舞蹈文化中占有特殊的地

位，是因为它取得了鲜明的成就，写下过辉煌的历史之页。当古代丝绸之路上走来的商人和艺人们用惊奇的目光注视光辉夺目的大唐文明时，当西域的舞者们用窈窕的身姿取悦于君主却在无意间将自己迅速旋转的舞影留在历史之墙的时候，它是当得起辉煌二字的。但是，纵观中国古代舞蹈发展史，我们也会发现，这是一个宫廷女乐系统高度发展了的传统。

在中国古代舞蹈传统中，女乐的盛大，是令人震惊和深思的。

关于女乐的最早的文字记载，见于甲骨文中，写法就是把一个“女”字和一个“乐”字拼接在一起。如果我们翻阅历史材料，就会发现，有文字资料可查的中国古代舞蹈，以舞种而言，最早的和最多的，就是祭祀、祈神的舞蹈和女乐。当社会的财富日益增多，享乐之风日益兴盛之时，当随着社会生产力的发展而获得了比祖先更加丰厚的财富之时，歌舞就不仅仅是对于神灵的贡献了，它必然转向娱神和娱人并举，又渐渐转为专门娱人。先是欢娱君王，因为他是“天子”，是祖先的化身，既而转向娱乐自己。正是在这样的历史条件下，中国的舞蹈传统中“女乐”得到了很大发展。

女乐的产生与发展，以及女乐在中国古代政治生活中的作用，是中国舞蹈文化史上的一个重要现象。同时，它又构成了一种特殊的历史景观。中国“女乐”艺术深深地影响了中国近两千年的舞蹈历史发展，成为宫廷乐舞艺术成就的体现，代表着中国古代舞蹈表演成就的高度。女乐得到充分发展的时代里，一方面，技艺出众者有的时候可以得到较高的社会地位，甚至因为嫁到皇家的深宫中而红极一时，如汉代的赵飞燕、唐代的杨玉环等。女乐不仅被皇家贵戚用于自己的享乐，还被用于国家之间的利益之争，是一种不见刀光剑影的武器。另一方面，因为舞者的奴隶般的社会地位，以及世代为“伎”为“倡”的传袭制度，使得歌舞者长期被看作是下等人，而她们所从事的舞蹈表演也被看作是一种倡优之事、

断臂舞俑 江苏扬州唐城出土



玩乐之举，甚至简直就是一种变相的女色侍奉。文人雅士们可以欣赏歌舞，可以与艺伎们调笑欢歌，甚至生发出“杜十娘”之类的爱情悲剧故事来，却没有任何社会知识分子真正参与到舞蹈艺术的活动中。舞蹈也就从来没有机会真正作为一种创作型的艺术出现在中国文艺的大舞台上。缺少了知识精英的实际参与，人们只能看到那些描写歌舞艺术表演的名词佳句，却看不到舞者自身的内心独白。即使是那些知识精英们，歌诗章句里流露出的也多是对于风流生活的潜在向往和追求；达官贵人们喜爱歌舞，更是为了消遣他们酒色过浓的无为人生。因此，中国舞蹈历史虽然很长，甚至在文学、绘画、音乐尚无记载之时舞蹈就已经被祖先们满怀崇敬地刻画在山崖峭壁和洞穴之中，但中国封建社会中的歌舞却并没能进入真正的艺术创作行列。舞蹈始终没有取得像中国诗歌、绘画、雕塑甚至小说那样的艺术地位。就中国舞史之作品看，带有鲜明艺术个性创造的作品也就非常匮乏。如此情况之下，舞蹈又怎么可能成为一门真正“创作”的艺术呢？！

我们也必须指出，如前所述，女乐之舞代表着中国历史上宫廷舞蹈表演方面的最高成就，女乐也因此处在了主流歌舞文化的位置上，并作为一种被历史承认和记载下来的东西渐渐成为了“传统”。但是，这是一种失重的舞蹈传统！

失重，意味着女乐之风在中国长期的封建社会里受到统治者推崇和扶持，占据了宫廷舞蹈表演的主流位置。相反，社会知识精英们极少参与，造成中国歌舞艺术创作中知识分子的历史缺席。失重，还意味着歌舞艺术极少触及到社会生活的重大矛盾、冲突，也很少触及人生的重大问题，不能深入社会生活的底蕴和人类灵魂的深处。相反，“吴王扶头酒初醒，秉烛张筵乐清景，美人不眠怜夜永，起舞亭亭乱花影。”^⑨失重，还意味着在歌舞艺术的行列里只有众多的表演者，有出色的艺人，却几乎没有独立的舞蹈艺术家的品格。失重，更意味着在漫长的中国舞蹈历史中，很少有艺术家的创作。历史

上的一些舞蹈艺人，也曾有过奉命而制作的节目，如唐朝的著名艺人李可及，擅长音律，曾改编西域的民间乐舞《菩萨蛮》，还编排了一个大型的乐舞《叹百年》去祭奠早死的公主。但是，这奉旨之作不是真正的艺术创作，因此，他们并不是严格意义上的编导艺术家。

20世纪的中国舞蹈，是对于这种“失重的传统”的鲜明决裂和彻底革命！

当“五四”新文化运动开历史文化新声之时，黎锦晖在“科学、民主”的召唤之下，在“教育救国”论的推动之下，创造了中国现代儿童歌舞的新历史。他在校园舞蹈广泛展开的基础上，让中国儿童歌舞表演进入了一个兴旺的阶段。黎锦晖的《麻雀与小孩》、《小小画家》等节目比较深刻地表现了某种人生道理，实际上他改变了传统发展的轨迹，在20世纪初叶的几十年里也彻底改变了儿童歌舞艺术史的轨迹。

当中国当代舞蹈的先驱者吴晓邦受父命之托东渡扶桑去寻找经济发达之路，却在本性和机遇的召唤下开始了音乐和舞蹈艺术的学习时，当他30年代初开始在上海传授“新舞蹈艺术”时，他哪里会想到他是在开拓整个20世纪中国新舞蹈艺术的先锋之路。吴晓邦举行了自己第一个“舞蹈作品发表会”。舞蹈，这一从日本艺术界拿来的名称虽然对于国人来说过于生僻，但是，在那个时候开如此一个“发表会”，还是引人注目的。因为，吴晓邦对中国传统舞蹈表演样式进行着反叛和大冲击！

当戴爱莲先生在陶行知所创办的“育才学校”里教授芭蕾舞课时，看到了来自延安的新秧歌《兄妹开荒》、《夫妻识字》等节目，她感悟到这是一个伟大舞蹈时代即将来临的先声预兆，立即决定暂时停止芭蕾舞的课程，组织学生和部分老师参加秧歌表演。从那以后，戴爱莲就与叶浅予等人一起深入到西康藏族地区，有计划地搜集、记录、整理少数民族舞蹈。并于1946年在四川重庆召开了举世闻名的“边疆舞蹈大会”。这是中国少数民族舞蹈文化第一

次被正式推向都市剧场，成为民族解放运动中象征着民主思想和健康平等的新生活的象征。

20世纪上半叶，中国舞蹈文化发生了一场翻天覆地的大革命。正是在与整个中国古代舞蹈史特别是女乐传统的比较中，20世纪前五十年里舞蹈开始有了“作品”的概念，开始有了“发表”的概念，开始有了“真善美”思想的注入，开始有了“为人生而舞”的鲜明口号和“新舞蹈艺术”的擎天大旗。这，就是我们必须以“革命”二字来标写的大变化。

新舞蹈艺术中有一些虽然来自中国各民族的民间舞蹈，但它属于现当代的剧场艺术之雏形，而改变了民间舞蹈原本求天祭地和自我娱乐的功能。

五十二年里虽然舞者从吴晓邦等零零星星的先驱到有了一支基本队伍，虽然还不够壮观，但作为艺术的舞蹈和艺术表演的舞者们终于出现在现代中国的舞台上！

新中国舞蹈史是以上这场舞蹈变革的逻辑推进，也是历史性的巨变。不懂得中国当代舞蹈发生的以上背景，或者不把新中国舞蹈放在整个舞蹈文化的历史变迁中去考察，就无法正确认识何谓新中国舞蹈之“新”。

注释：

- ① 荀子《乐论》。
- ② 孔子语，见《孝经·广要道》。
- ③ 戴叙伦《白紵词》。

Foreword

Feng Shuangbai

The history of dance in new China is the most creative part of the history of Chinese dance. Its myriad experiences and copious harvests have endowed it with significance of great historical advancement. When one attempts a reflective summary of the second half of the last century, with numerous works and artists exhibiting themselves in the perspective, one is led to the deeper meaning of the inevitable ultimate goal of human culture and to the positivity of the orientation of human civilization. No matter what the inertia was of the 50-year history of dance, or what twists and turns there were, the governing principle of the spiraling advancement of history has been elucidated in the evolutionary tendencies, artistic tastes, choreographic devices, and alternations of celebrities and events.

This book clarifies the historical sequence of dance in new China, focusing on the figures, works, and events, that exerted great influence on the advancement of dance, paying considerable attention to the artists who made achievements. Since it is impossible for any book to reproduce the complete history as it happened in reality, omissions are unavoidable. Some of the figures and events are given detailed treatment, while some are mentioned in brief and some dropped out due to the frame of reference or the historical coordinate here of the book. The history of contemporary Chinese dance is the continuation of the entire history of Chinese dance, and the succession of the great 20th century revolution in the domain of dance. I have noted in my book *An Outline History of Contemporary Chinese Dance* that our concern of the history of dance is “primarily a brief survey of the entire history of Chinese dancing art, in the hope that, by historical comparison, we can find something regular and something essential.” The goal of the observation and study of history is “not to accomplish an all-

encompassing narration of that history, but to highlight the facts that have left ineradicable imprints upon the advancement of dance in the past 100 years, and the changes that have engraved this part of dance history with special cultural bearings, for it is these facts and changes that have made the very soul of the dance progress in the past century.”

1. Dance after 1949 is the logical continuation of traditional Chinese dance

We say that the history of dance after 1949 is the logical continuation of the entire history of the development of Chinese dance, because Chinese dance boasts a tradition as long as that of the Chinese civilization with diversified and brilliant dance genres, numerous famous dancers and dancing compositions. When it strode in its own track toward the 20th century, it had behind itself a massive tradition, or an enormous reservoir of productions. The system of Chinese dance was enormous and eternal, thus, its profound influence was inevitable.

Dance advanced, in the Chinese history, through times of glory, and times of obscurity as well. In such times of glory and times of obscurity, Chinese dance acquired its unique tradition, which is spiritual, and stylized into kinetic patterns as well. Ritual dances as expressions of social beliefs, ceremonial patterns in celebrations of great enterprises, and entertainments in imposing majestic palaces, all form parts of the totality of the dance traditions of China. Among folks, dance is an important kinetic ritual to express gratitude to and pay homage to the gods, and meanwhile a part of private entertainment after the year-round hard work. Such folk things were originally considered indecent, and are scarcely found in historical documents, which, in most cases, recorded but mixtures of dances,

performances and important imperial events. However, due to the intimate relationship between the folk dance and mass psychology, the conviction that the folk dance mirrors manners, reflects social affairs, expresses popular complaints and diffuses civilization became the most interesting part of the Confucianist thinking of music and dance to the rulers. Chinese rulers of each generation believed that “music and sounds can penetrate deep into the soul wherein alterations are instantly found,” and that “music clarifies the society, sharpens ears and eyes, smoothes breaths and blood-flows, transforms fashions and customs, and pacifies all the people under heaven.” For this reason the folk music and the folk dance were paid great attention to. Folk dances were not only used by the rulers to detect “folk climates” and “folk manners” so as to examine the political state of the government, but also “collected” into the imperial court, altered and polished with the elegance and refinement of the court art, for the art slaves to study and perform, and turned into dance performances to please and cheer the rulers.

Here, one sees the map of the formation of the tradition of the Chinese court dance: the folk dance—“collected” to the court—altered and adopted—the slave female dance.

There was, of course, another important component of the court dance: the elegant court music system, which was originated in the Zhou Dynasty, consummated in the Han and the Tang periods, continued well into the Qing Dynasty times, and vanished all of a sudden at the beginning of the twentieth century with the collapse of the feudal monarchy in the flames of the Nationalist revolution. However, the dance performances in the ceremonies of worship to Confucius conducted in the Confucian Temple in Qufu of Shandong and in front of the Confucius statue beside

the Imperial Academy, reserved some of the genres of the majestic ritual dance, and retained the grandeur and solemnity of the majestic ritual art. The ritual music system and the slave female dance system make the major parts of the court dance of China.

It seems that the dance of new China is not at all a derivation from the court tradition, but a rebellion against it. Yet, the influence of the court tradition upon the dancing art of China is profound. The “slave female dance” and the “ceremonial celebration”, in particular, have perennially molded the Chinese concept of dance. It is impossible, therefore, that the court tradition exercised no effect upon the dancing art of China after 1949.

Apart from the court dance, there is another heritage of Chinese dance, that is, the folk dances of all Chinese nationalities, a resourceful vital flow of art. As previously noted, they were often collected “into the court”, serving as an entertainment to the gentry. Yet far from being loitering in the court because of such courtly favour, folk dances of all Chinese nationalities continued to grow with vigorous characteristics in their own earth among the folks. As a matter of fact, the folk dances of various Chinese nationalities make the essence of Chinese dance. As far back as in the Han and the Wei Dynasties, they had displayed their exuberance and tenacity. Following the large scale migration and intermingling of different nationalities during the South and the North Dynasties, after an intermixture of the folk dances of various nationalities, the Chinese dancing art, as a whole, reached its first peak in the Sui and the Tang Dynasties. In the Song Dynasty, the folk dances of various nationalities, especially that of the Han nationality, had already distinguished themselves by their basic styles and spiritual orientations. They were folk kinetic performances conducted around lunar new

year, to give thanks to gods of heaven and of earth, entertaining both the deities and the folks themselves. The folk dance, blended with particular national customs and practices, and melted with particular national traits and characteristics, gradually developed with their particular way of life, always forms the physical feature of the national culture. The folk dances, of any of the various nationalities of China, may exist in diverse appearances, but they share one thing in common, that is, they have a common artistic “character”, which is eternal and unchanging, throughout the history regardless of the alternations of political powers, as has been typically illustrated in the pliable elegance of the Dai dance, in the vehemence of the feet-stamping and body-shaking of the Mongolian dance, and in the demonstrativeness in restraint expressed by the dance of the Sinkiang Uygur nationality.

The dance of new China, inevitably, develops under the influence of the folk dance traditions. The history of the dance of new China, is a derivation from the history of the dance traditions, in whatever sense. The Chinese dance, of the past 50-odd years, to a great extent, developed in its own track, right under the enormous influence of the great traditions.

2. Dance after 1949 is the logical advancement of the twentieth century cultural renovativity

We hold that the history of dance is the succession of the revolution in the domain of dance in the 20th century. In what way is it thus?

Chinese dance enjoys a special place of importance in the totality of the dancing cultures of the world, because it made remarkable achievements, and added pages of glory to the history of civilization. Chinese dance well deserved the word glory, as the merchants and craftsmen entering China along the ancient Road

of Silk cast the surprised eyes of theirs upon the dazzling civilization of the great Tang Dynasty, and as the dancers of the west lands set off to please the monarchs with gentle postures but ended in imprinting the swift-pivoting dancing shadows of theirs upon the walls of history. But, from a diachronical observation of the history of Chinese dance, we can find that, this tradition is one with a highly developed system of the slave female dance of the court.

The earliest extant record of the slave female dance can be found in inscriptions on bones and tortoise shells, in which the Chinese characters for female and dance are put side by side. The sacrificial dance and slave female dance are found to be the earliest and most frequently performed genres of the ancient Chinese dance in the extant written documents of China.

When demand for ancestors' blessing was fulfilled in sacrifice, and further blessings from ancestors were no longer necessary because more wealth was guaranteed by the advancement of social productivity, with the agglomeration of more riches and the spreading of hedonistic way of life, songs and dances turned from sheer dedications to the gods, to entertainments for both gods and the mortals, and then to entertainments exclusively for the mortals. It was to entertain first of all the monarch because he was "the son of the heaven", or the incarnation of the ancestry, and secondly the common people. It was in this historical condition that the "slave female dance" gained great impetus in the Chinese dance traditions.

The formation and development of the slave female dance, and its special function in the political life of ancient China made it an important phenomenon in the Chinese dance culture, and a special historical sight of the global context, for it was not only enjoyed by the royal families but also used, if necessary, as an invisible

weapon in the struggles among countries for interests. Being the presentation of the achievement of the court dancing art, and the highest achievement of the ancient Chinese dance, the slave female dance has profoundly influenced the two-thousand-year history of the Chinese dance. In the times when the slave female dance was in its peak, the most skillful dancer could by luck achieve a high status, or even become the most popular and most favorable because of a marriage into the deep imperial palace, the most famous of whom were Lady Qi and Zhao Feiyan. Singers and dancers had long been treated as lesser beings due to their slavery and the inheritance of this status. The performance of the dancer was consequently not seriously taken, but, more often than not, turned out to be a disguised game of carnal pleasure. Therefore, despite its long history as shown by drawings carved with full admiration by ancestors on walls of cliffs and caves long before literature, painting, and music were able to be recorded, dance was unable to be ranked as a genuine art form, in the feudal times. Dance never had the chance to be presented as a decent creative art on the vast stage of Chinese arts. Knowledgeable elites could enjoy it and flirt with the female singers and dancers, and there could be such moving tragic love stories as that of Du Shiniang, but there was no serious participation of the intellectuals. Without the actual participation of the intellectual elites, the splendor of singing and dancing has survived in beautiful lines of poetry but never did the self-expressions of the inner worlds of the artists. The elites expressed in their poetry their unconscious longing for the dissolute way of life with these women; the gentry loved songs and dances to spend their carnal and empty life. But the singers and the dancers were long in low and humble positions, with neither freedom of life, nor independence, nor happiness. When the

practice of burying the live with the dead was in vogue, they were in most cases the victims. Dance seemed to be all the time marginal, unable to have an equal footing with Chinese poetry, painting, sculpture, and even with the lowly esteemed novel. The same was true of the performer. "The dancers" in the history of ancient dance, never reached the noble social status, as was reached by the artists in other domains of art, in the total structure of the Chinese culture. Works with distinct individuality were therefore sparse. Under such circumstances, how could dance develop into a genuine creative art?

It is necessary to point out that, as has been noted, the slave female dance represents the achievement of dance performance in the Chinese history. And due to such achievement, it was placed in the mainstream of the social culture, and as something recognized and recorded in the history, and eventually turned to be a "tradition". Yet this is an agravic dance tradition, which I call "the agravic Chinese dance tradition".

By agravic, it is meant that the slave female dance had long been a mainstream of the dance performance during Chinese monarchies with the favour and the support of rulers. By agravic it is also meant that it seldom touched the grave conflicts and contradictions in social and individual life, and seldom went deep enough to the bottommost of the social life and of the human soul. And by agravic it is meant that, though there were numerous performers and excellent craftsmen, there was hardly any one with an independent personality of the dancing artist. Moreover, by agravic it is meant that there was seldom any creation of the artist during its long history of Chinese dance. There were dancing craftsmen who made works according to the order of their superior. Take Li Keji, a famous craftsman of the Tang Dynasty, for example. He was

good at prosody, and once made an adaption of Pusaman, a folk dance from the west lands. And in order to cater for the emperor, he composed a grand dance *A Sighing of Life* in commemoration of the late princess. Such people, therefore, were not in the strict sense artists of dance compositions.

The twentieth century Chinese dance was a clean break from and a revolution to this agravic tradition.

In the May Fourth New Culture Movement, at the call for science and democracy, and inspired by the idea of "education to save the nation", Li Jinhui originated the history of modern juvenile dance. By popularizing the campus dance, he promoted the performance of juvenile dance of China into a flourishing period. His compositions, such as *Sparrows and The Child* and *The Little Drawer*, were instructive expressions of morals of human life. Actually he altered the course of the tradition where there were seldom juvenile dance performances in the real sense, except the court performances by children in the Tang and the Song Dynasties, which were composed to extol the achievements of the ruling class, as things far from the reality of the life of children.

Wu Xiaobang, the pioneer of modern Chinese dance, went to Japan to find ways of economic prosperity by the persuasion of his father; but, urged by his nature and aided by chance, he turned to study the music and the dance. When he began to teach "the new dancing art" in a silk shop on North Sichuan Road, Shanghai, he had the least idea of pioneering the road to the new dancing art of the twentieth century. He had his first "exhibition of dance compositions", a term borrowed from Japanese, totally strange to the Chinese at his time. Such an "exhibition" attracted great attention, for in this way, he was launching rebellion and challenge to the styles of the traditional Chinese dance

performance.

When lecturing on the ballet in "Yucai School" founded by Tao Xingzhi, Dai Ailian saw such new yangko performances from Yan'an as "Brother and Sister Opening up the Wasteland" and "Husband and Wife Learning to Read", and she discerned the sign of a great era of dance approaching. Immediately she returned to Qingmuguan of Chongqing, where her school was, and decided to suspend her ballet lessons there and to organize the students and some of the teachers to participate in yangko performances instead. From then on, Dai Ailian, together with Ye Qianyu and others, began to collect, record, and edit dance compositions of the minorities in such areas as Xikang, deep in Tibet. Thus the world-renown "Conference of Border Dances of China" was held in Chongqing, Sichuan, in 1946. This was the first time the dance cultures of the Chinese minorities had been formally presented in the theatre in the metropolis. The border dances, marginal to the public taste, had by now, become the symbols of democracy and equality in the movement of national liberation.

In the first half of the twentieth century, the dance culture of China underwent a great epoch-making revolution. Different from the entire history of ancient Chinese dance, the 50-odd years witnessed the appearance of the concepts like "compositions" and "publication", the instillation of "truth, kindness, and beauty", and there appeared the slogan of "dance for life's sake", and the sky-scraping banner of the "new dancing art". These are the great changes that we must term as "revolutions". They are world-shocking changes.

The new dancing art is not at all the elegant court dance, neither is it the slave female dance of the court. It contains inevitable borrowings from the folk dance,

but it is nevertheless the origin of the contemporary theatric art, for it has depleted the functions of the folk tradition, that to show worship and sacrifice to the heaven and the earth, and that to entertain human beings themselves.

In the 50 years, with the relatively small band of dancers developed from the few precursors like Wu Xiaobang, the dance as an art and the dancer as an artist eventually succeeded in establishing themselves on the stage of modern China.

The history of dance of new China is the logical advancement of the aforementioned dance revolution, and the historical advancement as well. Without the knowledge of the historical context where the dance of new China had originated, or failing to examine it in the entire evolution of Chinese dance, it is difficult to have an appropriate understanding of the "newness" of new China.

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