

# The History and Types of Chinese Folk Dance

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## Abstract

In China, the inclusion of Chinese folk dance in early childhood education has been gaining attention as a means to preserve cultural heritage and promote holistic development. Many educational institutions, including those in Hebei Province, have been incorporating Chinese folk dance into their early childhood education programs. This integration aims to foster an appreciation for traditional Chinese culture, enhance physical coordination, and stimulate creativity among young learners. Additionally, emphasis on cultural education aligns with broader governmental initiatives to uphold and celebrate China's rich cultural traditions. As a result, there is a growing recognition of the significance of Chinese folk dance within the early childhood education landscape in China, with efforts to weave it into curricula and activities.

**Keywords:** History; Types; Chinese; Folk Dance

## Introduction

### Dance and Folk dance

Dancing is a form of expression and communication through rhythmic movement. It encompasses a wide range of styles and purposes, including social interaction, cultural expression, storytelling, entertainment, performance, and physical exercise. Dancing is often accompanied by music and can serve as an individual or collective activity, playing a significant role in various cultures and societies worldwide (Milton & Carole, 1979). Dancing is a type of human movement where expressive and rhythmic body motions are done in time with music or other rhythmic sounds. It is seen as a social activity, an art form, and a kind of exercise. There are numerous different types of dancing, including tap, hip hop, ballroom, ballet, modern, and many more. Dancing can have many different functions based on the person or culture, but it frequently functions as a form of communication, celebration, entertainment, and self-expression. For millennia, dance has been an integral aspect of human civilization and remains a widely accepted mode of expression and amusement across the globe. The relationship between dance and other artistic mediums, like music and visual arts, is also examined by dance theory. It looks at how dance can be used to communicate meaning and ideas, and how it can be shaped by cultural norms and expectations (Adshead-Lansdale, 1994).

## **History of dance**

The history of dance is a rich and diverse narrative that spans across cultures and civilizations. Dance has been an integral part of human expression for centuries, serving as a form of communication, storytelling, celebration, and ritual. It has evolved in various forms, from ancient religious rituals and traditional folk dances to classical ballet, modern dance, and contemporary styles. Throughout history, dance has reflected social, cultural, and artistic movements, influencing and being influenced by music, art, and societal changes. Archaeological proof of the first dancing Among the archeological evidence for early dance are the 10,000-year-old murals in the Rock Shelters of Bhimbetka in Madhya Pradesh, India, and the about 3300-BC Egyptian tomb paintings that depict dancing figures. Before written languages were created, stories were passed down orally and through performances, and it has been hypothesized that dancing played a big part in these traditions. The use of dance in ecstasies and healing rites, as observed in many contemporary indigenous societies, is thought to have influenced dance's early social evolution. (Guenther, 1975). Some of the earliest known historical sources mention Greek dance, or *choros*, and are attributed to Plato, Aristotle, Plutarch, and Lucian. The Bible and Talmud mention several dance-related events and have about thirty different terms for dance. Neolithic Chinese pottery depicts groups of people holding hands and dancing in a line. The oracle bones were found to have the first known Chinese term for "dance" etched on them. There are dance descriptions in the *Lüshi Chunqiu*. In ancient China, rudimentary dance was linked to shamanic rites and magic.

## **Chinese dance**

Chinese dance is a highly diverse art form that encompasses a wide range of traditional, classical, and folk-dance styles originating from different regions across China. It often incorporates graceful movements, intricate footwork, and symbolic gestures, and is known for its vibrant costumes and expressive storytelling. Chinese dance has deep historical and cultural roots and is an integral part of various celebrations, ceremonies, and theatrical performances. It reflects the rich cultural heritage of China and continues to be practiced and performed both within China and around the world. The dance culture of the Chinese nation has a long history, dating back five thousand years. There is a continuous collection of cultural relics, images and texts that record the development trajectory of the Chinese nation's dance, which is also rare in the history of world culture. The unearthed pottery pots with dancing patterns from the Neolithic Age dating back five or six thousand years ago have shown the world the neat formations of primitive dances and their characteristics of group nature and self-entertainment. From the ancient legend: "Emperor Jun had eight sons, and he started singing and dancing." This shows that the creators of singing and dancing are groups. In order to maintain and extend life, human beings must create material wealth and spiritual wealth through labor. In order to reproduce the species, humans must have children. Therefore, labor and reproduction are the most basic and important social activities of human beings. Dance, which is deeply rooted in human life, will inevitably reflect the content of labor and reproduction (Lu, 2013).

The figures on the pottery pots with dancing patterns and tail decorations are not only a reflection of hunting and labor life, but also bear the relics of totem worship. The totem is the mark and protector of the clan, so people worship it. The huge rock paintings of fertility worship in Hutubi, Xinjiang, shocked the world's archaeological community. It clearly shows the strong desire of mankind to pray for the reproduction of descendants and the prosperity of the clan. Under the image of men and women having sex, there are two groups of children who move neatly and dance wildly. They are the hope and future of mankind (Gong, 2016).

### **Original Chinese dance**

Original Chinese dance is a traditional art form that encompasses a wide range of dance styles rooted in Chinese culture and history. These styles include classical Chinese dance, folk dance, and minority ethnic dances, each with its own unique movements, gestures, and costumes. Classical Chinese dance, for example, is known for its elegant and refined movements, while folk dances reflect the cultural traditions of various regions within China. These original Chinese dance forms have been passed down through generations and continue to play a significant role in Chinese performing arts and cultural expression (Zhang & Zhao, 2021). Chinese classical dance was founded in the 1950s. After the reform and opening up, Chinese classical dance combines the training system of ballet, and integrates Chinese martial arts, traditional opera, folk acrobatics, hand, eye, body and other techniques and techniques; Chinese classical dance has the national characteristics of our country, and it is transformed into Chinese classical dance. The national skills are presented in the process of jumping: twisting, tilting, turning, dodging, spreading, soaring and moving. Today, there are also new developments in lateral turns in the air. Chinese classical dance has initially formed our nation's own training system, and this system already has relatively strong national characteristics, including our nation's aesthetic characteristics and norms, as well as our difficulty and artistic expression. By fully understanding the national characteristics of these technologies and techniques, we can better master the key points of their movements during the training process, which can also give us confidence. Professor Li Zhengyi said this when interpreting "classical dance": It is not a copy of ancient dance, but a new classical dance based on a strong foundation of traditional dance aesthetics and adapted to the appreciation habits of modern people. It takes the nation as the main body, is based on national aesthetic principles such as opera and martial arts, and absorbs and draws on beneficial parts of foreign arts such as ballet, making it an independent, national and contemporary dance type and system. (Lu, 2013).

Classical dance also has outstanding rhythmic characteristics, which is inseparable from the characteristics of our national music. Our national music rarely has the same strong and weak, regular, uniform, and pulsating rhythms like Western music, which generally exhibits elasticity. The characteristics of combining rhythm and dots and lines. It is reflected in the rhythm that it is mostly dotted (stretch - rush) or segmented (hurry - stretch), or it is stretching at both ends and stretching in the middle, or it is stretching at both ends and the middle is stretched, or it is fast and slow, or it is slow and fast, etc. wait. Therefore, the inner rhythm of the movements formed, such as softness, movement and stillness, slowness, relaxation, hesitation, cadence, combination of points and lines, etc., thus produce our specific kinetic characteristics and sense of rhythm.

From studying the documents mentioned above, the researcher summarized the knowledge that was studied and found that, the content provided highlights the significance of dancing as a form of expression and communication, encompassing various styles and cultural importance. It outlines the diverse functions of dance, including social interaction, storytelling, entertainment, and physical exercise. The historical aspect delves into how dance has evolved across different civilizations, reflecting social, cultural, and artistic movements. It mentions archaeological evidence and early references to dance in various ancient societies, emphasizing its integral role in human expression and traditions before written language was established.

The content provides an overview of Chinese dance, highlighting its diverse styles—traditional, classical, and folk dances, all deeply rooted in Chinese culture. It emphasizes the historical significance of Chinese dance, dating back thousands of years, reflecting the rich cultural heritage of China and its various dance forms. The text delves into the evolution of Chinese classical dance, its incorporation of national characteristics and aesthetic principles, and its unique rhythmic characteristics intertwined with Chinese national music. Additionally, it discusses the role of original Chinese dance forms in Chinese performing arts and cultural expression.

### **Chinese folk dance**

Folk dances are mostly group dances that include singing and dancing, with various dance movements, each with its own ethnic and local characteristics. The contents of these dances include the hunting life, war experiences, totem beliefs and fertility worship of ancient primitive societies, as well as entertainment activities for people to express joy in various traditional festivals in modern life, and some incorporate various folk customs and sacrifices, the legacy of ceremonial activities. Folk dance has a distinctive national style and strong local characteristics. It has no national or geographical boundaries and can communicate with countries around the world. Therefore, it is the most social and international dance.

Chinese folk dance is a shining pearl in the treasure house of Chinese national art. It not only has a long history, a wide range of themes, rich content, and diverse forms, but its large number is also rare in the world. In terms of its historical development and current situation, it can be divided into traditional folk dance and modern folk dance. This article introduces traditional folk dance, which is handed down in history, has fixed dance routines and movement terminology, and is based on self-entertainment in the square. Lord's folk dance. This kind of folk dance is an ancient and primitive dance form produced when the dance art was underdeveloped. In the process of being passed down from generation to generation, the people respect it and cherish it, allowing it to develop to this day (Wang, 1985).

## **The history of Chinese folk dance**

The history of Chinese folkdance dates back thousands of years and is deeply intertwined with China's rich cultural heritage. Chinese folk dance has been an integral part of various social and ceremonial occasions, reflecting the traditions, customs, and ways of life within different regions and ethnic groups across China. These dances often incorporate elements such as traditional costumes, music, and symbolic movements that depict stories, rituals, and celebrations specific to each community. Throughout history, Chinese folk dance has served as a means of cultural preservation, community bonding, and artistic expression, evolving alongside the changes and developments in Chinese society. Many traditional Chinese dances have a long history. Some of the dances might have originated as ceremonials or spectacles, while others might be folk dances or dances that were performed in the imperial court. Two of the most well-known traditional Chinese dances are the lion and dragon dances, both of which were performed in various forms under earlier dynasties. The present dragon dance, on the other hand, may have been created more recently. A lion dance similar to the one practiced today was first described during the Tang period. Some of the oldest dances that are known to have been in China may have had dancers dressed as mythical animals or creatures. During the Han era, certain forms of dragon dance were also recorded. However, the dance as it is today is not comparable to the dragon dances of the Han period. A dance performed as part of a ritual to ask for rain during a drought was observed because it was believed that the Chinese dragon would bring rain. Additional dragon dances include acts where fish change into dragons and performances at Baixi variety shows when artists dress like green dragons and play flutes.

Chinese dance has historically grown significantly as a result of traditional dances. Some of the oldest dances performed in court ceremonies and rituals may have originated from folk dances. Rulers from various dynasties collected folk dances, and many of these eventually became court dances. However, at various times throughout history, there had also been hostility to some folk dances, and some emperors had even attempted to abolish them. Many traditional dances are related to hunting, harvesting, and the ancient gods associated with these pursuits. The Constellation Dance, for example, aimed to gather as much seed grain as stars in the sky; the Harpoon Dance was associated with the mythological figure Fuxi, who is credited with providing the Han people with their fish nets; and the Plough Dance was associated with the agricultural deity Shennong (Janet, 2010).

There are 56 different ethnic groups in China, Ethnic dance in China encompasses a wide variety of traditional dance forms that originate from the diverse ethnic groups within the country. Each ethnic group has its own unique dances, often characterized by specific movements, costumes, and music that reflect the cultural traditions and history of that particular group. These dances serve as a means of preserving cultural heritage, storytelling, and celebrating important events within each community. Ethnic dance in China is an integral part of the country's rich cultural tapestry and continues to be practiced and celebrated across various regions. and each of these groups has a distinctive dance that represents the way of life, culture, and ethnic customs of the area. Aside from daily life, every ethnic group employs dancing as a fundamental technique of expressing their inner feelings. People gather to dance their way through the joy in each other's hearts whenever there is a festival. Therefore, dance is a fantastic way for all people and nations to express their inner feelings (Li, 2006).

### **Types of Chinese Folk Dance**

The most outstanding feature of Chinese folk dance is its folklore. From the perspective of dance functions, we divide folk dances into five categories, namely: seasonal and customary dances; life customs dances (such as self-entertainment, social mate selection, fitness competitions, performing arts, etc.); etiquette and customs dances (such as during childbirth ceremonies). , dances performed in ceremonial activities such as adult ceremonies, weddings, birthday ceremonies, funerals, sacrifices, military ceremonies, etc.; belief and custom dances (such as dances performed in Taoism, Buddhism, primitive religions, and folk belief activities); labor custom dances (Han, 2004).

**Seasonal custom dance:** Festival custom dance refers to specific dance forms derived from the customs and traditions of different festivals or seasons across China. These dances are often associated with specific festivals, agricultural activities or religious ceremonies and reflect local culture and traditions. These dances often feature specific costumes, music, and steps, and play an important role in celebrations to commemorate or celebrate a specific holiday or occasion.

**Lifestyle dance:** refers to specific dance forms derived from daily life, social activities and traditional celebrations across China. These dances reflect people's daily lives, community activities, and customs on specific occasions. Custom dances are usually related to weddings, harvest festivals, welcome ceremonies and other events, as well as celebrations with folk characteristics. These dances reflect the socio-cultural background and therefore have different expressions and styles across China (Zhu, 2016).

**Etiquette and customary dance:** refers to dance forms performed in specific ceremonial occasions or traditional ceremonies across China. These dances are often associated with weddings, rituals, banquets, or other important social events. With their unique steps, costumes and music, these dances reflect respect, celebration and social interaction in Chinese culture. The ceremonial customs and dances of each region have their own unique characteristics, reflecting local history, values and traditions.

At various events in China, people perform many types of dances. These events can include holiday celebrations, weddings, community gatherings, theatrical performances, etc. On these occasions, people perform various forms of dance, from traditional folk dances to modern pop dances. These dances are often performed to celebrate, entertain, socialize, or demonstrate specific cultures and values (Li, 2012).

**Custom dances:** are dance forms performed during specific cultural, traditional, or religious ceremonies. These dances often reflect the values and traditions of a particular community or group. They may be associated with specific holiday celebrations, wedding ceremonies, harvest celebrations or other important events to pass on and showcase local cultural heritage (Sun, 1992).

**Labor custom dances:** refer to dances performed in celebrations of harvest, farming, or other activities related to agricultural labor. These dances often reflect celebrations of harvest and labor, and may also showcase traditional agricultural work scenes and techniques. These dance forms have a long history in China and many other farming societies and are considered an important part of traditional culture (Tang, 2019).

### **Folk dance forms**

Ethnic dance is also called folk dance, which generally refers to dance forms that are produced and spread among the people, are restricted by folk culture, are improvised but have a relatively stable style, and have self-entertainment as the main function. Chinese folk dance is a branch of Chinese dance. It was founded in the early 1950s. It effectively inspects, collects, and sorts out various ethnic dances scattered among the people, and then processes and recreates them.

Singing and dancing, free and lively. A very important feature of Chinese folk dance is the close combination of dancing and singing. This form of singing and dancing is free, lively and lively. It can express more content of life than pure dance. It is also easy to understand, so it is very popular among the Chinese people. Skillful use of props and combination of skills. Many Chinese folk dances skillfully use props, such as fans, handkerchiefs, long silks, tambourines, single drums, flower sticks, lanterns, flower umbrellas, etc., which greatly enhances the artistic expression ability of the dance and makes the dance movements more Rich, beautiful and colorful. The plot is vivid and the images are vivid. Chinese folk dances place great emphasis on content, and most of them are based on certain stories and legends. Therefore, the characters have distinctive images and outstanding personalities. Although some dances only express a certain emotion, they often appear as a fragment of a complete storyline. For example, Guangdong's "Ying Ge" tells the story of Liang Shanbo's heroes attacking Daming Palace; Fujian's "Dagu Parasol" legend tells the story of Zheng Chenggong's military training to resist foreign invaders (Wang, 1985).

From studying the documents mentioned above, the researcher summarized the knowledge that was studied and found that, the content underscores the significance of Chinese folk dance, encompassing diverse themes such as hunting, war experiences, totem beliefs, fertility worship, and modern festival celebrations. It emphasizes the distinctive national style and strong local characteristics inherent in Chinese folk dance, highlighting its historical development and categorizing it into traditional and modern forms. Additionally, it discusses how Chinese folk dance has historically served as a means of cultural preservation, community bonding, and artistic expression, reflecting the traditions, customs, and ways of life within different regions and ethnic groups across China. The text also touches on the wide variety of traditional dance forms originating from the diverse ethnic groups within China, each characterized by specific movements, costumes, and music that reflect the cultural traditions and history of those groups.

### **Conclusion**

The types of Chinese folk dance comprise Seasonal custom dance, reflecting specific festival and agricultural activities; Lifestyle dance, mirroring daily life, community activities, and traditional celebrations; Etiquette and customary dance, performed in ceremonial occasions or important social events; Custom dances, rooted in cultural, traditional, or religious ceremonies; and Labor custom dances, celebrating harvests and agricultural labor. Additionally, the article discusses the form of ethnic dance, emphasizing its close combination of singing and dancing, the use of props, and vivid storytelling. It underscores that Chinese folk dances are deeply rooted in stories and legends, offering rich expressions of emotion and historical narratives

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