

Research on the Integration and Development of Hainan Traditional Culture and China's Classical Dance Performance

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Abstract: Hainan's traditional culture is rooted in the Central Plains heritage, the intangible cultural heritage of the Li and Miao ethnic groups, marine ecology, the overseas Chinese hometown of Nanyang, and the culture of exiled officials. It combines ethnic, maritime, open, and inclusive characteristics, serving as an important component of China's outstanding regional culture. China's classical dance, with its aesthetic core of "vivid energy, harmony of form and spirit, and balanced curves", embodies the traditional Chinese aesthetic spirit. The two share natural points of convergence in cultural roots, aesthetic conceptions, and physical expression. Their integrated development can not only infuse classical dance with regional characteristics and vitality but also revitalize Hainan's traditional culture through dance art, contributing to the cultural dissemination and tourism integration of the free trade port. This paper reviews the core resources of Hainan's traditional culture and the aesthetic traits of classical dance, analyzes the value, current status, and challenges of their integration, and constructs a development path from five dimensions: creation, teaching, performance, dissemination, and support. It also provides examples through Hainan's original dance dramas and repertoire practices, offering theoretical references and practical solutions for the innovation of Hainan's dance art, the inheritance of traditional culture, and the upgrading of the cultural tourism industry.

Keywords: Hainan traditional culture; China's classical dance; Dance performance; Integrated development; Intangible cultural heritage revitalization; Cultural tourism integration

Online publication: March 31, 2026

1. Introduction

The construction of Hainan Free Trade Port has listed cultural prosperity, the integration of culture and tourism, and the protection of intangible cultural heritage as important tasks. The intangible cultural heritage of the Li and Miao ethnic groups, Dongpo culture, maritime culture, Nanyang culture, and Li brocade/Li pottery/coconut carving form the unique cultural identity of Hainan. As the orthodox form of ethnic dance, China's

classical dance urgently needs to root itself in local cultural soil during its regionalization and modernization transformation, breaking through the bottleneck of homogeneous creation. Currently, most dance creations in Hainan focus on ethnic and folk dances, while the systematic integration of classical dance with Hainan's traditional culture remains in the exploratory stage, facing issues such as superficial cultural symbols, rigidly pieced-together body language, insufficient integration of aesthetic conceptions, and a lack of original masterpieces.

Against this backdrop, promoting the deep integration of Hainan's traditional culture with China's classical dance performances is not only an inevitable path for classical dance to uphold tradition while innovating, but also an important vehicle for the living inheritance and artistic dissemination of Hainan's traditional culture. Leveraging the open advantages of the free trade port and cultural tourism resources, using classical dance as a medium to tell Hainan's stories effectively holds significant practical importance for enhancing Hainan's cultural soft power and building a regional art brand.

2. Core concepts and integration foundation

2.1. Core components of Hainan's traditional culture

Hainan's traditional culture is a multicultural system shaped by the convergence of diverse ethnic groups, forms, and regions. Its core resources include: Ethnic Intangible Cultural Heritage: Li and Miao ethnic songs and dances, Li brocade weaving and dyeing, Li pottery, coconut carving, firewood-drawing dance, Qianling double-dagger dance, and Zhongpan dance, all recognized as national or provincial-level intangible cultural heritage. Historical Celebrity Culture: The exiled officials' culture, represented by Su Shi, cultivated a spirit of magnanimity, inclusiveness, and reverence for literature and education. Marine Ecological Culture: The South China Sea navigation, coconut grove ecology, and island folk customs embody a dynamic, expansive, and inclusive aesthetic. Folk Festival Culture: Events like the Li ethnic "March 3rd Festival", Danzhou Tiaosheng, and Junpo Festival combine ritualistic solemnity, mass participation, and artistic expression. Overseas Chinese Nanyang Culture: The arcade architecture and overseas Chinese history foster a cultural character that blends Chinese and Western elements with openness and inclusiveness.

2.2. The aesthetic core of China's classical dance

China's classical dance originates from opera, martial arts, and traditional aesthetics, with its core aesthetic values being vivid energy, harmony of form and spirit, flowing curves, balance of strength and softness, and a sense of harmony. It emphasizes controlling force with energy, leading form with spirit, and conveying the Dao through dance. The body language focuses on circularity, curvature, twisting, tilting, containment, protrusion, and movement. The stage presentation pursues subtlety, poetic expression, and poeticization, which align perfectly with the restrained, lively, natural, and profound essence of Hainan's traditional culture.

2.3. The intrinsic logic of their integration

Cultural affinity: Both traditions are rooted in China's outstanding traditional culture, embodying the philosophical principles of harmony between humanity and nature, as well as the values of moderation and elegance. Aesthetic complementarity: Classical dance provides standardized body language, stage aesthetics, and narrative structure, while Hainan culture offers unique symbols, artistic conception, and spiritual essence, achieving the fusion of "classical framework + Hainan soul." Contemporary relevance: The localized innovation

of classical dance and the cultural dissemination of Hainan mutually reinforce each other, aligning with the cultural development and cultural-tourism integration needs of the free trade port.

3. The contemporary value of integrating Hainan's traditional culture with classical dance performances

3.1. Artistic innovation value: Breaking the homogenization of classical dance to create Hainan's artistic identity

By integrating Hainan's cultural symbols, dynamic rhythms, and artistic conceptions into classical dance, this approach transcends the conventional themes and styles of traditional classical dance, creating a distinctive performance style that blends "classical paradigms with Hainan's unique charm." This innovation enhances the works' recognizability and artistic competitiveness. For instance, the fusion of classical dance movements with the Li ethnic group's waist-waving and knee-shaking rhythms, combined with the fluidity of water sleeves inspired by Li brocade patterns, infuses classical dance with vibrant regional vitality.

3.2. Cultural inheritance value: Revitalizing intangible cultural heritage through dance and achieving a modern expression of traditional culture

As a visual art form, dance transforms static cultural elements like Li brocade, Li pottery, and Dongpo culture into dynamic physical expressions, bringing intangible cultural heritage from museums to the stage. The original dance drama "Huang Daopo" blends classical and ethnic dance to recreate the historical fusion of Li brocade weaving techniques and Li-Han culture, bringing this millennia-old heritage to life on stage.

3.3. Cultural and tourism empowerment value: Creating high-quality performances and promoting deep integration of culture and tourism

Classical dance works integrating Hainan culture can be transformed into resident performances at tourist attractions, festival showcases, and cultural tourism performance projects, becoming a new hallmark of Hainan's cultural tourism. For instance, the dance segment "Moon over the South China Sea", which combines maritime imagery with classical choreography, and "Heart Embracing Su Dongpo", which incorporates the artistic conception of Su Dongpo, have achieved the dual objectives of "cultivating tourism through culture and highlighting culture through tourism."

3.4. Educational value: Cultivating local sentiment and developing compound dance talents

In the classical dance teaching, integrating Hainan culture to help students understand the regional cultural heritage, enhance cultural confidence and creative ability, cultivate compound dance talents who are proficient in classical dance skills and familiar with Hainan culture, and serve the cultural construction of Hainan Free Trade Port.

3.5. Communication and promotion value: Leveraging the Free Trade Port's advantages to convey Hainan's voice to the world

China's classical dance is an internationally recognized symbol of Chinese art. After integrating Hainan culture, it becomes more unique and attractive. By leveraging the Boao Forum for Asia and international cultural and

tourism exchange activities, it can showcase the charm of Hainan's traditional culture to the world and enhance the international communication power of Chinese culture.

4. The current situation and difficulties of the integration and development of Hainan's traditional culture and classical dance performance

4.1. Development status

The initial exploration of original creations has yielded a series of integrated works such as “Huang Daopo”, “Gan Gong Niao”, “Tao Shu”, and “Xin ‘an Dongpo”, which blend Li brocade, Li pottery, Dongpo culture, and Li ethnic legends with classical and ethnic dance vocabulary, earning recognition from both the market and the industry. Educational institutions have gradually incorporated these elements into their teaching, with schools like the Nanhai Dance College of Haikou University of Economics integrating Hainan's local culture into classical dance education and creation. Award-winning works such as “Tao Shu” have been produced, fostering localized talent development. The integration of culture and tourism has begun to take shape, with some scenic spots and festivals introducing classical dance performances and combining Hainan's cultural elements to create immersive experiences, forming an initial industrial framework.

4.2. Realistic dilemma

The integration of cultural elements remains superficial, often limited to superficial combinations of costumes, props, and music without delving into the essence, artistic conception, or spiritual core. The physical language fails to resonate with cultural depth. High-quality creations are scarce, with themes being overly concentrated and techniques monotonous. There is a lack of flagship works that combine artistic excellence, cultural depth, and market appeal, resulting in weak brand recognition. The educational system is underdeveloped, as classical dance courses in universities have not systematically incorporated Hainan's cultural elements. Instructors lack local cultural literacy, and the ability to integrate cultural elements into teaching is insufficient. Industrial transformation remains inadequate, with immature market operations for performance products, limited show frequency, and narrow distribution channels, failing to establish a sustainable cultural tourism performance IP. Theoretical research lags behind, with few systematic studies on the integration of Hainan culture and classical dance, leaving a void in theoretical guidance and creative standards.

5. Integration and development path of Hainan traditional culture and China's classical dance performance

5.1. Creative fusion: Deeply digging the cultural core, creating regional original works

Through thematic exploration, the production focuses on six core narratives: Li brocade craftsmanship, Li pottery artistry, Su Dongpo's Qiong Island residence, Gan Gong bird folklore, maritime expeditions in the South China Sea, and overseas Chinese communities in Southeast Asia. These stories are woven into classical dance narratives. The choreography integrates Li ethnic movements—waist swaying, knee tremors, shoulder jolts, and rhythmic steps—into classical dance's body rhythm elements. It incorporates Li brocade's intricate patterns, swaying coconut groves, and ocean waves into circular movements, water sleeves, and folding fan gestures. The artistic conception employs classical dance's aesthetics of “negative space, suggestive expression, and poeticization” to depict Hainan's harmonious blend of mountains and seas, embodying its serene and open-

minded spirit. Water sleeves mimic ocean waves, body movements portray coconut groves, and breath conveys the essence of Li culture. The dance drama “Huang Daopo” exemplifies this fusion by distilling Li brocade weaving techniques into classical gestures, set against the folk tradition of “March 3rd.” The solo piece “Tao Shu” uses classical dance movements to depict Li pottery shaping, creating a poetic dialogue between intangible cultural heritage and classical dance.

5.2. Teaching integration: Building a localized curriculum system and cultivating integrated talents

The curriculum has been restructured to incorporate modules on Hainan traditional culture, Li ethnic dance dynamics, intangible cultural heritage dance elements, and Hainan dance appreciation into classical dance fundamentals, body rhythm, and repertoire courses, achieving an integrated teaching approach of “classical techniques + Hainan culture.” Faculty development includes cultural fieldwork for teachers, visits of intangible cultural heritage inheritors to campuses, and cross-dance training combining classical and ethnic dance, enhancing teachers’ ability to integrate teaching with creative practice. Practice-oriented, the program encourages students to integrate Hainan culture into choreography and performance through original works, competition showcases, and stage practice, improving their cultural expression skills.

5.3. Performance integration: Innovating stage presentations to enhance artistic expressiveness

The stage design and costumes integrate Li brocade patterns, indigo hues, coconut shell motifs, and arcade lines into classical dance attire, creating a striking visual identity. The music blends Li ethnic instruments like the nose flute and dingdong wood with classical dance accompaniment, harmonizing with Danzhou tune rhythms to forge a distinctive auditory style. The performance style, rooted in classical dance’s “form, spirit, vigor, and rhythm”, incorporates Hainan culture’s vitality, simplicity, and magnanimity, resulting in a dynamic fusion of strength and grace that embodies the essence of mountain and sea.

5.4. Communication integration: Promoting the Hainan dance brand through diversified channels

Stage communication involves hosting original classical dance performances in Hainan and the Free Trade Port Dance Art Festival, promoting nationwide tours of high-quality productions such as “Huang Daopo” and “Gan Gong Niao.” Cultural tourism communication focuses on creating immersive resident performances of classical dance and Hainan culture in scenic areas like Sanya, Haikou, and Baoting, while developing intangible cultural heritage dance experience projects. Digital communication utilizes short videos, live streaming, and VR/AR technologies to launch short videos and online performances of classical dance fusion works, expanding the young audience base ^[1]. International communication leverages the Free Trade Port’s international exchange platform to participate in international dance festivals and cultural exchange activities, spreading Hainan culture and the charm of China’s classical dance to the world.

5.5. Ensuring integration: Improving mechanism support to promote sustainable development

Policy support involves securing special funding from cultural tourism and education authorities to foster original creative works, talent development, and cultural tourism performance projects. Platform support entails

establishing collaborative innovation platforms for theater troupes, educational institutions, enterprises, and intangible cultural heritage inheritors, creating an integrated mechanism encompassing “creation, performance, education, production, and inheritance.” Theoretical support includes conducting specialized research, issuing creative guidelines, summarizing integration principles, and providing theoretical foundations for practical implementation ^[2].

6. Case study analysis

6.1. Original ethnic dance drama “Huang Daopo”

Based on Huang Daopo’s study of Li brocade skills and textile technology innovation in Hainan during the late Song and early Yuan dynasties, this work deeply integrates classical dance movements, opera patterns, and Li ethnic dance elements. Through refining spinning, dyeing, weaving, and embroidery techniques, it vividly recreates the historical fusion of Li and Han cultures. Awarded the “Five Ones Project” prize, it has become a benchmark work showcasing the integration of Hainan’s traditional culture and dance art ^[3].

6.2. Dance section of the musical “Xin’an Dongpo”

The dance combines classical and modern dance vocabulary, taking Su Shi’s mood in Qiong as the clue, and integrating the Hainan farming scene, wave image, and open spirit into the dance performance. The body posture is extended, and the spirit is leisurely, realizing the high degree of unity between Dongpo culture and classical dance aesthetics, and becoming the model of modern expression of Hainan history and culture ^[4].

7. Conclusion and outlook

The integration of Hainan’s traditional culture with China’s classical dance performances possesses a profound cultural foundation, distinct contemporary value, and vast practical space ^[5]. This fusion not only promotes the regionalization and diversified innovation of China’s classical dance but also revitalizes Hainan’s intangible cultural heritage through artistic forms, preserves historical cultural continuity, and shapes the cultural image of the free trade port. Although current issues include superficial integration, a lack of high-quality works, and lagging industries, by delving into the core through creative exploration, systematically integrating into teaching, innovatively presenting performances, diversifying dissemination, and comprehensively ensuring mechanisms, a deep integration of “classical as the body, Hainan as the soul” can be achieved, paving a unique path for the development of dance art with Hainan characteristics.

In the future, with the continuous advancement of cultural construction in Hainan Free Trade Port, the integration of Hainan’s traditional culture and classical dance will develop towards refinement, IP development, industrialization, and internationalization: more original dance dramas and performances with national influence will emerge; regular cultural and tourism performance brands will be formed; a comprehensive localized teaching and research system will be established; leveraging digital technology and international platforms, Hainan’s distinctive China’s classical dance will reach across the nation and the world, becoming a shining card for the inheritance of excellent traditional Chinese culture and the prosperity of free trade port culture.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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