

Development of Southeast Asian Folk Dance from the Perspective of Artistic Anthropology

Jinyuan Wang^{1,a*}

¹Philippine Christian University, Manila, Philippine

^awang.jinyuan@pcu.edu.ph

*corresponding author

Keywords: Art Anthropology; Southeast Asian Folk Dance; Field Investigation; Document Analysis

Abstract: In Southeast Asia, folk dance, as a part of cultural expression, faces issues of inheritance and protection in the process of modernization. To address these issues, this study analyzes the development path of Southeast Asian folk dance from the perspective of art anthropology. The research aims to explore the relationship between cultural diversity and dance forms, and promote the protection of cultural heritage. This article takes Bali as an example to collect dance practice data through field surveys, recording details of dance movements, music, and costumes; secondly, conducts interviews to understand the cultural significance and historical background of dance among dancers and the community; finally, based on literature analysis, compares the dance styles and development trends in different regions. The results showed that in the surveyed communities, the average number of participants in traditional dance decreased by 30%, but through community education and cultural activities, participation increased by 10%, and the frequency of community cultural activities increased to 3 times a week. The method of art anthropology effectively reveals the cultural connotation of dance, proposes strategies for protecting and promoting folk dance, and provides important support for the sustainable development of Southeast Asian cultural heritage.

1. Introduction

Southeast Asia is renowned for its rich and diverse cultural traditions and art forms, among which folk dance is not only an important carrier of cultural expression, but also a symbol of community identity and historical heritage. However, with the acceleration of globalization and modernization, traditional dance is facing significant challenges in terms of inheritance and protection. The number of participants in folk dances in many regions has been decreasing year by year, and traditional skills and cultural knowledge are gradually being marginalized. Especially under the influence of tourism and modern entertainment culture, many young people's interest in traditional dance has weakened, leading to severe challenges in the protection of cultural heritage.

Therefore, it is particularly important to explore effective protection and inheritance strategies.

This study adopts the method of art anthropology and explores in depth the development path of Southeast Asian folk dance through various means such as field surveys, interviews, and literature analysis. Art anthropology emphasizes cultural diversity and the importance of dance as a social interaction, enabling us to better understand the cultural significance of dance in communities and its relationship with social change. Through the systematic collection and analysis of dance practice data, the research aims to reveal the cultural connotation and inheritance status of folk dance, and provide theoretical basis for the protection and promotion of traditional dance.

The second part of this article reviews relevant literature and analyzes the current research status and existing problems of folk dance; the third part introduces the research methods, including the specific implementation of field surveys and interviews; the fourth part presents the research results and discusses the changes in participation in traditional dance and their reasons; finally, the fifth part summarizes the research findings and proposes suggestions for future research and practice.

2. Related Work

Due to the impact of the epidemic and modernization on folk dance, research on it has gradually increased, mainly exploring the survival status of dance workers and the challenges of cultural inheritance. Zhang [1] conducted empirical research to investigate and analyze the survival status of Malaysian Chinese dance workers during the epidemic period, and found that Chinese dance workers exhibit characteristics of lower salaries, more part-time jobs, poor job stability, and low satisfaction with the current situation. Urmston & Aujla [2] investigated how dance artists work in an inclusive dance talent development environment, observing four dance classes to demonstrate the quality of dance artists in practice. Zhao [3] started from the theoretical perspective of cultural ecology and applied the knowledge and methods of "structured" theory to understand the structural imbalance of the cultural ecology of contemporary ethnic minority traditional dances in terms of material, spiritual, institutional, and artistic dimensions. San Juan Ferrer & Hóla [4] believe that dance is considered a beneficial component of human emotional development and a factor that benefits emotional intelligence and other related aspects. Liu [5] sorted out the current development status of various fields from the perspective of cultural ecology, reflected on the existing modernity problems, and summarized the essential reasons for the "loss of cultural subjectivity" and the "rupture of cultural ecological chain". Then, he proposed a development strategy of "intertextual symbiosis of ideas, innovative action, and complementary ecological functions", in order to provide reference for the development of folk dance in Guangdong. Lee & Kong [6] studied the impact of high school students' participation in dance classes on gender development, and found that the duration of dance class participation has a significant effect on the social sub factors of autonomy, achievement, and collaboration. Zhang [7] explored the current situation and development path of sports dance, providing reference and assistance for the high-quality development of sports dance under the background of the National Fitness Program. Aquino [8] was mainly based on the theory of skill acquisition, with the aim of determining the management practices and overall development of dance troupe members. Wang [9] briefly described the role of folk dance in higher art education, discussed the challenges faced by the development of folk dance from the perspective of higher art education in the new era, and proposed a path for the development of folk dance from the perspective of higher art education in the new era, aiming to cultivate students' national spirit and promote the development of traditional culture based on folk dance studies. Aulya & Yahya [10] found that using a theme based educational dance learning model to learn and design dance works is very attractive to students. These studies provide an important perspective for understanding the current situation and development of Southeast Asian folk dance, emphasizing the balance between

cultural heritage and modernization, and its implications for future development.

3. Method

3.1 Theoretical Model from the Perspective of Art Anthropology

The theoretical model from the perspective of art anthropology mainly revolves around the complex relationship between culture, performance, and society, emphasizing art as an important form of cultural expression and social interaction. Under this framework, art is not seen as an isolated creation, but rather as a component of a unique social, historical, and political context. Art anthropology focuses on the diversity of artistic practice, cultural diversity, and the role and significance of art in different cultures[11]. Firstly, most art anthropologists participate in and observe artistic activities through field research to capture the details of artistic expression and the cultural connotations it carries. This participatory observation not only helps to understand the artwork itself, but also reveals other important issues behind artistic creation, such as social relationships, power dynamics, and identity confirmation. Secondly, art anthropology is passionate about the dynamism of performance, believing that art is not just a completed product, but a process involving multiple stages such as creation, performance, acceptance, and recreation. In this process, the interaction between dancers, audience, and community is seen as the key to understanding the meaning of art. In this context, it also explores the unity and disharmony between art and globalization and modernization. From this perspective, art anthropology may be able to see the modernization of art forms in Southeast Asian folk dances, thereby triggering challenges and opportunities in the environment. Ultimately, from the perspective of art anthropology, we will have tools to understand artistic phenomena and practical strategies for protecting and regenerating cultural heritage, leading to dialogue and understanding[12].

3.2 Implementation Steps of Field Investigation

For the purpose of this field study, we follow a similar procedure in choosing the research location. Bali, which is endowed with a rich tradition of dance culture and vibrant folk art activities, has been chosen as the primary research site. The next stage, once the location has been clearly set, consists of establishing contacts with the local cultural organizations, art groups, community leaders, and dance schools, forming the basis for obtaining their support and assistance. This can be initially communicated through email, phone, or social media [13]. The next step is to conduct preliminary visits and have informal exchanges with community members to understand the basic situation of local dance, important festivals, and event arrangements. This step helps researchers integrate into the local culture and obtain more information. During this process, personally participating in local dance rehearsals, performances, and festive events such as the "Bali Traditional Dance Festival" and "Bali Dance School Classroom", observe dancers' movements, costumes, music, and audience reactions, and record important details. At the same time, in-depth interviews are conducted with dancers, choreographers, and cultural inheritors, covering topics such as the history, cultural significance, personal experiences, and modern influences of dance, to ensure a natural and smooth interview process and obtain authentic feedback. The interview content should cover the origin, evolution, current challenges, and their expectations for future development of dance. In order to enrich the data, interview content was recorded, dance performances and rehearsals were filmed, and relevant literature and materials such as local history books, dance manuals, and academic articles were collected. After data collection, organizing the collected data, analyze observation records and interview content, search for themes and patterns, and extract the main findings about the development of folk dance in Bali. The data can be organized using mean and variance, as

follows:

$$\text{Mean} = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N xi \quad (1)$$

$$\text{Variance} = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N (xi - \text{mean})^2 \quad (2)$$

N is the number of data points, and xi is each data point. Table 1 shows the specificities and meanings of different traditional dances in Bali:

Table 1: Specificity and significance of different traditional dances in Bali

Dance Name	Category	Performance Features	Cultural Significance
Kecak	Ritual Dance	Combines chanting and dance, performers form a circle imitating monkey calls	Expresses reverence for deities, narrates the story of "Ramayana"
Legong	Court Dance	Elegant movements, performers wear elaborate costumes, typically female dancers	Reflects royal culture of Bali, portrays themes of love and beauty
Barong	Ritual Dance	Performed with masks and costumes, showcases the struggle between a deity and evil spirits	Symbolizes the battle between good and evil, protects the village from malevolent spirits
Topeng	Mask Dance	Performers wear masks, portray different characters, often includes humorous elements	Conveys moral lessons and cultural stories through dramatic form
Pendet	Welcoming Dance	Dancers hold flower baskets, perform graceful movements, typically performed at celebrations	Expresses welcome to guests, symbolizes blessings and abundance
Janger	Folk Dance	Participants form a circle, interact through singing and dancing, strong rhythm	Promotes community unity, expresses joy and celebration
Rejang	Court Dance	Light and agile movements, typically performed by young women, showcases grace and fluidity	Part of religious rituals, demonstrates respect and reverence for deities

The entire field investigation process emphasizes participation and interactivity, aiming to reveal the importance of dance as a cultural expression and its changes and challenges in the modernization process through in-depth cultural immersion and diverse perspectives.

3.3 Strategy and Scope of Literature Analysis

This article takes Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines as examples. Bali dance in Indonesia is famous for its elegant movements and exquisite costumes, emphasizing the combination of religious rituals and community activities. Dances such as Kecak and Legong are not only carriers

of cultural heritage, but also important components of tourism and economic development[14]. In recent years, however, modernity has modified the face of the tradition and reduced the participation of local communities as well as the venues for performances, prompting communities to explore cultural activities and education to entice young people's active participation. Meanwhile, there are more dramatic plot developments and storytelling elements in traditional Thai dances like Khon and Lakhon. Their dance forms are usually combined with Thai classical music and drama by groups that acts as expressions of royal culture. Thai dance is quite endangered by global forces, and coalescing authentic vigorous forces with modernity has become an art development trend. The folk dances of the Philippines exhibit more diverse characteristics, influenced by Spanish colonization. Their dances such as Tinikling and Pandanggo sa Ilaw blend local and foreign elements, reflecting the essence of cultural integration. The revival movement of Filipino dance is gradually emerging, and the younger generation of dancers are redefining and disseminating traditional dance through social media and local festivals to address the challenges of cultural heritage preservation. Overall, folk dances in various regions of Southeast Asia have demonstrated different adaptation strategies in the face of the dual challenges of modernization and globalization, retaining the core elements of traditional culture while seeking new vitality through continuous innovation, this provides important references for the future protection and development of cultural heritage[15].

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Development Strategy

The development strategies of this article include community participation and educational promotion, cross-cultural cooperation and integration, and digital and social media communication:

(1) Community participation and educational promotion encourage young people to participate in the learning and practice of folk dance through organizing community dance courses and workshops. These courses not only teach dance techniques, but also delve into the cultural background and historical significance of dance to enhance participants' cultural identity. Education promotion can be achieved by collaborating with schools and community centers to regularly organize performances and festive events, inspiring enthusiasm and participation in the community. This strategy aims to cultivate a new generation of dancers while enhancing the community's sense of pride and protection of traditional culture.

(2) Cross cultural cooperation and integration promote dance exchange and cooperation between different regions and cultures, encourage dance groups to collaborate with international artists, and carry out joint performances or exchange projects. Through this approach, not only can new creative inspiration be introduced, but the diversity and adaptability of traditional dance can also be showcased. For example, Kecak dance in Bali can be combined with modern dance or contemporary music to create new forms of performance. This cross-cultural collaboration can broaden the audience of dance and enhance its competitiveness in the global cultural market.

(3) Digitization and social media dissemination utilize digital technology and social media platforms to enhance the visibility and influence of traditional dance. By producing high-quality videos and online courses, dancers and cultural organizations can spread dance to a wider audience. In addition, the interactivity of social media can attract young people to participate in discussions and sharing, promoting the modern dissemination of traditional dance. This strategy not only helps to protect cultural heritage, but also attracts young people's interest in traditional dance and promotes its inheritance.

4.2 Current Status of Traditional Dance in the Community

A survey was conducted on the number of participants in traditional dance in the local community of Bali, Indonesia in Southeast Asia from 2020 to 2023, and the data during these 48 months was divided into the first 24 months and the last 24 months. The survey results are shown in Figure 1:

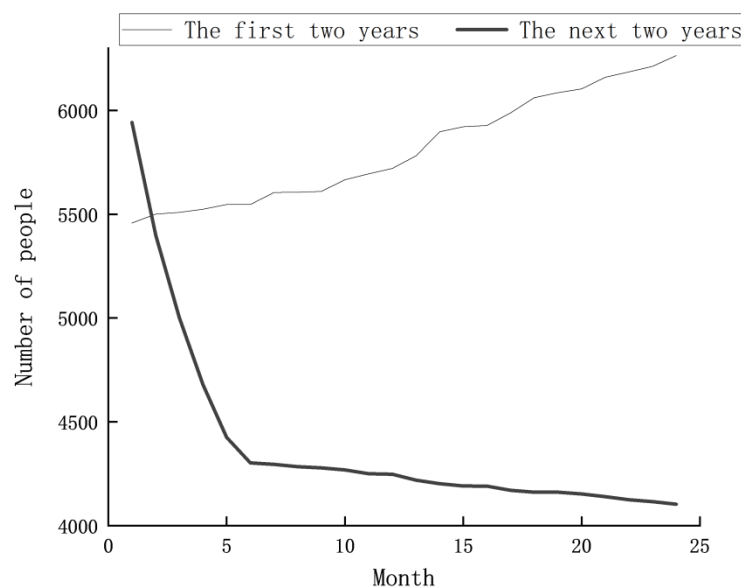


Figure 1: Changes in the number of participants in traditional dance over the past four years

The overall number of participants in the first 24 months remains between 5500 and 6200, showing a relatively stable state, with the highest reaching 6265 people. After 24 months, although the number of participants in the first month increases to 5943, there is a continuous downward trend afterwards, with the lowest dropping to 4103. This change may be influenced by multiple factors, including social and psychological changes after the epidemic, a decrease in community activities, and a weakening of young people's interest in traditional culture. The social restrictions and suspension of public activities caused by the COVID-19 pandemic may lead many people to distance themselves from traditional dance participation. In addition, the rise of modern entertainment forms and the lack of cultural heritage may lead to a weakening of the appeal of the younger generation to traditional dance, thereby affecting a decrease in the number of participants, with an overall decrease of about 30%.

4.3 Changes in Folk Dance after Implementing Strategies

Applying the strategy proposed in this article to 12 communities and record the participation of traditional folk dance before and after the operation strategy, as shown in Figure 2.

After implementing operational strategies in 12 communities, the participation in traditional folk dance has generally increased, and the data shows positive changes. Before the operation strategy, the average participation rate is 49%, with the highest being 58% and the lowest being 44%, indicating a relatively low and concentrated distribution of participation. After implementing the strategy, the average participation rate increases to 59%, with the highest reaching 63% and the lowest reaching 57%, indicating that most communities have significantly increased their

participation in traditional folk dances. For example, the participation rate of Community 9 increases from 44% to 63%, showing the largest growth rate, indicating that the new strategy has achieved significant results in the community. The participation rate of Community 4 has slightly increased from 58% to 59%, although the growth rate is small, it still reflects the effectiveness of the strategy. Figure 3 shows the results of the weekly cultural activity frequency survey in the community after applying the strategy.

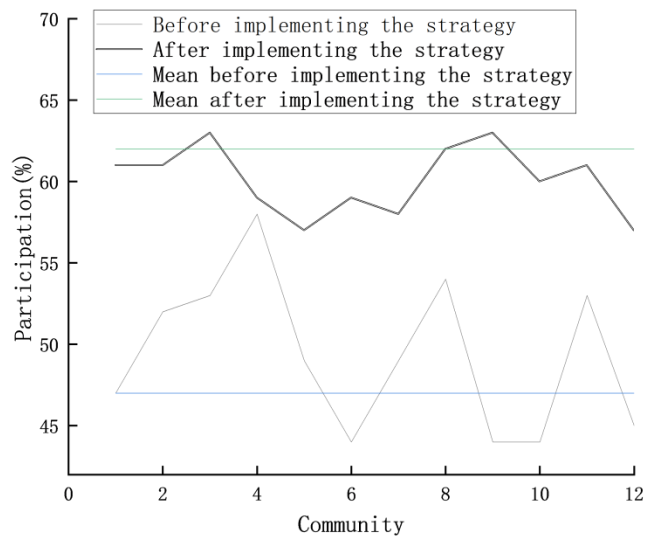


Figure 2: Participation

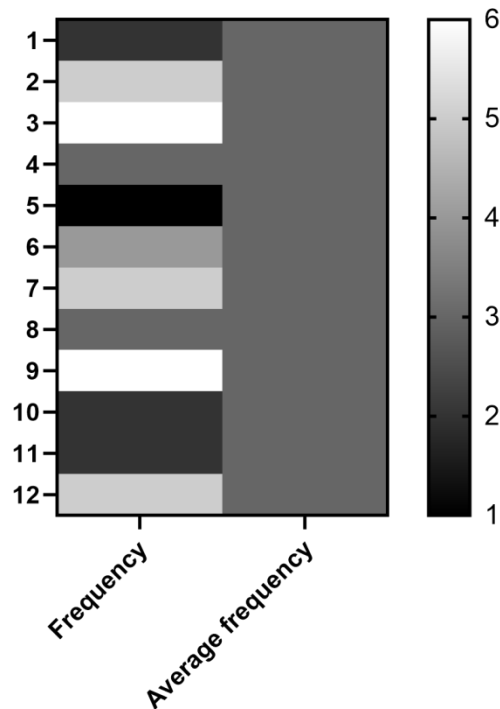


Figure 3: Frequency

The survey data in this article shows that the range of weekly activity frequency in the community after applying the strategy is 1 to 5, with the highest weekly activity frequency of 5 in Community 10, indicating that the community has performed well in organizing and participating in cultural activities, benefiting from effective community cooperation and resource utilization. The frequency of Community 8 is 4, closely following, indicating a positive cultural participation atmosphere. In contrast, the frequency of Community 1 and Community 4 is only 1, indicating a relatively low frequency of cultural activities, suggesting that these communities still face challenges in promoting cultural activities and require further incentives and resource support. The frequency of other communities is mainly concentrated between 2 and 3, indicating that most communities have a certain level of participation in cultural activities. Overall, the average weekly activity frequency of the 12 communities is 3 times. These data reflect that after applying the strategy, the frequency of community cultural activities has generally increased, indicating that residents have a positive attitude and interest in cultural participation.

5. Conclusion

In this article, it was found through research that although the participation in traditional dance in some communities has decreased, many regions are striving to restore and enhance the vitality of dance through effective community participation, educational promotion, and cross-cultural cooperation strategies. These strategies not only enhance the community's sense of identity with traditional culture, but also promote the protection and inheritance of cultural heritage. Future research should continue to focus on how to use digital means and social media to promote traditional dance in a rapidly changing social environment, in order to attract the participation of the younger generation. In addition, it is recommended to strengthen international exchanges and cooperation in order to share successful experiences and achieve cultural diversity and sustainable development. Through these efforts, Southeast Asian folk dances are expected to find new paths to adapt to modern society while maintaining their traditional essence, giving them new vitality on the global cultural stage.

Reference

- [1]Zhang Yuan. *Research on the Development Status of Malaysian Chinese Dance in the Post Pandemic Era* [J]. *Journal of Jimei University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*, 2024, 27 (1): 84-92.
- [2]Urmston E, Aujla I J. *Values, attributes, and practices of dance artists in inclusive dance talent development contexts*[J]. *Journal of Dance Education*, 2021, 21(1): 14-23.
- [3]Zhao Yong. *Imbalance and Restoration: Development of Contemporary Ethnic Minority Traditional Dance under Cultural Ecological Structure* [J]. *Journal of Heihe University*, 2024, 15 (6): 151-155.
- [4]San-Juan-Ferrer B, H óla P. *Emotional intelligence and dance: a systematic review*[J]. *Research in Dance Education*, 2020, 21(1): 57-81.
- [5]Liu Weiyu. *Development Status, Reflection, and Countermeasures of Guangdong Folk Dance from the Perspective of Cultural Ecology* [J]. *Journal of Shaoguan University*, 2023, 44 (7): 103-108.
- [6]Lee S H, Kong H J. *The Effect of Participation in Dance Classes on Social Skill Development and Peer Relationship*[J]. *Journal of Digital Convergence*, 2020, 18(9): 423-431.
- [7]Zhang Xinrong. *Analysis of the Development Path of Sports Dance under the Background of the National Fitness Program* [J]. *Modern Business and Industry*, 2023, 44 (5): 87-89.

- [8]Aquino J M D. *Management Practices and Holistic Development of Dance Troupe in Selected Secondary Schools*[J]. *International Journal of Social Learning (IJSL)*, 2022, 2(2): 186-200.
- [9]Wang Donghong. *Development of Folk Dance from the Perspective of Higher Art Education in the New Era* [J]. *Journal of Jiangxi Electric Power Vocational and Technical College*, 2023, 36(8): 127-129.
- [10]Aulya V, Yahya Y. *Development of Dance Learning Model at School*[J]. *LANGGAM: International Journal of Social Science Education, Art and Culture*, 2023, 2(02): 13-20.
- [11]You Y. *Online technologies in dance education (China and worldwide experience)*[J]. *Research in Dance Education*, 2022, 23(4): 396-412.
- [12]Zihan L. *A Study of Dance Curriculum Models Based on Children's Dance Training Institutions*[J]. *Curriculum and Teaching Methodology*, 2024, 7(1): 21-28.
- [13]Peng Z. *The Current Situation and Development of Dance Creation in the New Media Era*[J]. *Art and Performance Letters*, 2023, 4(5): 32-38.
- [14]Wilson D, Richards P. *Building a case for coaching: informing an innovative, pedagogical approach to dancer development*[J]. *Research in Dance Education*, 2024, 25(3): 313-330.
- [15]Limanskaya O V, Kriventsova I V, Podrigalo L V, et al. *The influence of professional training disciplines on the physical fitness level of the folk dance department students*[J]. *Pedagogy of Physical Culture and Sports*, 2020, 24(5): 248-254.