



## Altogether Dances with God ---Recording China's Exorcism Dance Culture

Feirui Li

School of Art

Guangxi Nationality University

East Ge Road 18-1, Nanning 530022, China

E-mail: lifeiruiwudao@163.com

### Abstract

In the human common history, has experienced the nature worship, the totemism, the ancestor worship and the God worship stage, takes one worldwide basis culture symbiosis, the primitive Nuo culture has in world many areas preserves. This primitive cultural carry-over trace Nuo culture because of its preserved integrity and richness, being possibly called "world treasure". However this non-renewable treasure actually needs our protection today.

**Keywords:** Nuo culture, God worship, Dances

In the human common history, has experienced the nature worship, the totemism, the ancestor worship and the God worship stage, takes one worldwide basis culture symbiosis, the primitive Nuo culture has in world many areas preserves, for instance the US "Halloween", Germany "the devil big parade" and so on is this primitive cultural carry-over trace. The exorcism dance is called "the living fossil which China dances". But China Nuo the culture because of its preservation's integrity and the richness, being possible be called "the world treasure", it has the very big inspiration function regarding today's dance. The excavation dance prototype and will also will certainly to be we better carries on the creation regarding the dance living fossil's excavation and the crabbing the foundation. Therefore, the exorcism dance this history cultural heritage, should bring to the attention. However this non-renewable treasure, actually needs our protection today.

The ancient exorcism dance has the glorious historical development for several thousand years. Not only in each generation (week, Chinese, Tang, Song) the palace has Nuo offers a sacrifice to the etiquette, was also still had in the folk drives Nuo the habits and customs. Until today, our country many provincial capital areas still retained this kind of ancient customs handed down from the past. Nuo or Nuo the sacrifice, is one ancient witchcraft activity. According to the literature record, the Chinese Shangzhou time, this witchcraft activity is not only in vogue in the general area south of Yellow River area, and is the continuation of by one kind of fixed pattern. About Nuo the original meaning, "Shuowen" explained that is "the line has the festival. From human, difficult sound. Difficult, the original form makes (jin bird). "Shuowen" said: "jin bird, bird also, from bird, jin sound. jin bird or from good. "Difficult" the original meaning is a bird, but, when drives epidemic disease solution it "difficultly", must uses the original meaning, also borrows righteousness. Since "Nuo", difficult is the false promissory note, but non-original form, then why expels evil spirits by the epidemic disease original form? Its original form is the ghost jin. , "Shuowen" releases is, "preposterous startled word, from ghost, difficult province sound." Explained according to the exegesis of ancient texts: Now so-called Nuo (for example Nuo sacrifice, exorcism dance and so on) pursue the god of plague. Its original form should be "the ghost jin". "Nuo", "difficult" is the false promissory note. In the explanations of words in ancient books is called this kind of phenomenon "the ancient pronunciation interchangeable uses and borrowed uses", is this has its character to borrow, namely existing "the ghost jin" does not use, actually borrows one with "the ghost jin" the unison, but the significance has nothing to do "Nuo", afterward used the false promissory note "Nuo" to replace the original form "the ghost jin", false promissory note "Nuo" the original meaning vanished gradually, this was the section note so-called "Nuo the original meaning is waste". The intelligible meaning's evolution, to understood that Nuo culture evolution is the great importance. The dance says "Exorcism dance", when jumps Nuo, the people wear the false face, assumes the guise each kind of god beast's appearance, jumps fierce intense is dancing "Side Dance", "12 God

Beastly Dances", must harm humanity's god of plague, the devil expels the elimination. "Exorcism dance" in "Confucian analects", "Zhou rite" and "Lushih Chunchiu" and so on the books had the record; In "Historical Records of the Eastern Han dynasty Etiquette Will", "Xin Tang Shu Ritual music Will" and "Musical conservatory Salmagundi Drives Nuo", the record is more exhaustive. "Zhou rite Summer Official" carries: "side, holds the Mongolian bearskin, gold in April, the unreliable clothes Zhu clothes, hold Ge Yangdun, leads hundred slaves, but time difficult (Nuo), drives the epidemic disease by the rope room." "Historical Records of the Eastern Han dynasty Etiquette Will" carries: "Ji Dong .....Is first sacrificial on first, big Nuo says it by the epidemic disease. Its meter, selects above the palace gate juniors year ten years old, below 12 years old, 120 artificial All the red kerchief, the soap system, holds in a big way tao. Side, the gold four items, hoodwinks the bearskin, the unreliable clothes Zhu palm, holds Ge Yangdun. 12 beasts have clothes Mao Jia. ...." "Xin Tang Shu Ritual music Will" carries: "big Nuo ritual. Choose above the man-year 12 years old, below 16 years old for false face, red cloth riding clothes. 24 people are a team, six artificial row. Manages 12 people, red kerchief red chronic illness, hemp whip. Its person, the side false face, the gold four items, hoodwink the bearskin, the choroid Zhu clothes, holds the shield right. ....By chases in malicious ghost Yu Jin."

Mentions China " the exorcism dance culture ", always gives the human a seed to be wrapped in a shroud of obscurity, the implication profound and is unable the artistic charm which resists. These are condensing " ferocious severe US " the mask and the movement, have become " have the meaning mark ", for the human by the intense artistic infection, takes into the people in the totem history time which that returns makes up returns to original condition to go ..... The Chinese extant earliest exorcism dance bronze mask, preserves in the Henan Yuzhou, this is Western Zhou Dynasty time historical relics, was the approximately three millenniums. This pays the mask by the bronze casting size like average man facial features, only assumes the half shape, lower part does not have the mouth, this is to cause the dancer on the face fixed, this has also inherited the Shang Dynasty mask " two temple like halberds " characteristic. The mask both sides also have the eyelet, by puts on the rope for the dancer is wears, or inserts the feather and so on. On this mask prominent two beastly angles, has manifested the advocator god beastly totem idea and the customs handed down from the past fully. According to the historical records record, the Western Zhou Dynasty time, this kind wears the fierce beastly shape mask's dance, generally is when carries on " Nuo the sacrifice " is performing expels evil spirits by the epidemic disease. "Nuo " also said that " big Nuo ", expelled evil spirits originally for the ancient times people by the epidemic disease ceremony, in held in this kind of ceremony's activity, the people dressed up Cheng Shen the beast, performed the rough dance, the movement intense is being also fierce, but also often shouted wildly yells. At that time, "big Nuo " generally represented the country by the royal court and the feudal lord in the year's end hold. Nuo offers a sacrifice to the Zhou Dynasty royal palace stipulated that every year holds three times, has the key player who specially appointed Nuo offers a sacrifice to be called side, he wears the mask. The body throws over the bearskin, black coat, red pants, as soon as grasps the spear, raises the shield, in the mouth is shouting " Nuo "! "Nuo"! Is leading large military forces and so on numerous god beast to the palace various corners caper call letter, will harm people's evil spirit demon to pursue in order to one year safety and propitious. Afterward, this kind of activity spread gradually to the folk, Confucius once wore the court dress, stood respectfully before the ancestral temple has watched the folk; Countryman Nuo ". Is retaining now also the exorcism dance, the name of various kinds of local drama, is becomes by " big Nuo " the development change. The Western Zhou Dynasty exorcism dance bronze mask is one which domestic only saves, it has provided the precious material in kind for the research Nuo culture.

The primitive time's person dances on the affection, by each kind of movement and behavior, express thoughts sentiment. In the Yangshao ruins, discovered that a ceramic trough endophragm has a group to dance the colored drawing on pottery image, was considered that is the earliest dance poses record. Beginning of the historical data record god which expels pestilence, "side holds the Mongolian bearskin. The gold four items, Zhu Yixuan the clothes, hold Ge Yangdun, leads hundred Magistrate, but time Nuo, drives the epidemic disease by the rope room." On side is hoodwinking the bearskin, puts on the red gown, in the hand is wielding Ge Yudun, possibly is the initial state Nuo the mask, Nuo the clothing and Nuo weapon's manifestation. The exorcism dance simulation rogue fearful each kind of god's image, dances with joy, exudes "Nuo Nuo" the sound, frightens and pursues each kind of evil spirit. The Spring and Autumn Period Warring States time, the official and folk "Nuo" the activity is in vogue day by day. For example Chu country renowned poet Qu Yuan, in the massive collections, reorganize the locality Nuo the song, in the exorcism dance foundation, has created the immortal poem "Nine Songs". This work and offers a sacrifice to the god by the dance form performance myth fable to expel evil spirits the activity, as soon as praises the motherland the grand landscape and the local conditions and social customs, the work passes through is published then widely spreads. To the Han Dynasty, Nuo the custom presented the quite obvious change and the innovation, Nuo art has the recent development. "Exorcism dance" is the sacrifice dance, the mask dance, the animal dance three dissolves is one body's one kind novel, the unique dance show form. It is already different with the common sacrificial offering dance; (for example "the narrow sacrifice" "Emperor Dance", it is one kind pure prays for rain offers a sacrifice to specially. Is also different with the common mask dance; (carries buddhist priest mask to jump buddhist priest to dance, Dai Panguan the mask jumps fat official dance); Is more different with the general thing dance; (installs the dragon dragon dance, plays the role of the phoenix

dance phoenix that kind of pure simulation animal shape animal dance. ) but "Exorcism dance" actually different. It is in every year's end, when Nuo offers a sacrifice to, assumes the guise "side" (the Mongolian bearskin, gold four items), "12 god beasts" (engrave wooden are surface, animal head person), "chen sub-(palace gate disciple) the image, takes the unique dance to have (Ge Yudun, side uses; tao the drum, chen sub-takes; The hemp whip, the god beast holds) illness to shout Nuo Nuo the sound, the four directions chases the epidemic disease, eight sides expelled evil spirits, pursue, throw, catch up with, kill, have developed fierce intense "Side Dance" and "12 God Beastly Dances". This has formed the ancient exorcism dance is different general with pure "the sacrificial offering dance", "the mask dance", "the animal dance" one kind of novel dance show form and the unique artistic individuality. According to "Historical Records of the Eastern Han dynasty. The etiquette will" records, Han Dynasty big Nuo in rite ceremony, highlighted the side to deal with 12 beastly dances as well as the palace gate, chang sub-led with the dance refined language - - "to drive Nuo the song". In the Tang Dynasty, the entertainment ingredient obtains further development in Nuo the activity, the exorcism dance performance side by a person of expansion is four people, Nuo offers a sacrifice to with various merges into one organic whole happily, and performs the dance primarily. When Song Dynasty, "the Tokyo Dream China Record" records according to Meng Yuanlao, exorcism dance then increased many characters to perform, even dreamed of Tangminghuang Zhong Kui to seize the ghost the story also to reorganize the exorcism dance "Zhong Kui Younger sister". Lu You "Old Study Hut Note" also said that the national capital to perform the palace in a big way Nuo, once sent for to Guilin to purchase "800 one, the whole families beautiful do not have similarly humbly one" the mask. When performance also had the similar drama, the acrobatics to enter enters the stage and the spoken parts "the onset and retreat spoken language". Obviously Song Dynasty Nuo art already presented the drama and the acrobatics seed. In the future Yuan Ming and Qing Dynasties various dynasty, Nuo the activity will be along the Tang Song's pathway extension, Nuo gradually will also step in the literary domain. The exorcism dance development had certain influence to China's place drama, even develops Cheng Ke outside the religious activities the independent performance exorcism dance name of various kinds of local drama, certain areas, the exorcism dance itself has developed the name of various kinds of local drama, the name of various kinds of local drama performance's main feature is again the role wears does not make the false face, the exorcism dance and the name of various kinds of local drama is vivid. Had reflected specifically China performing arts each stage's different appearance love by the dance to the play form development process in for the populace, have the specific national style and the local characteristics, spreads until now.

Because social life complex complex and evolves day by day, the people implore with the repayment God object to be also many, already has "the natural god" and in the fable deity, also has deified in the historical outstanding character, even also has the ghosts and demons - - to ask it not to damage. However, in several thousand year Nuo matter activity, although Nuo art is unceasingly rich, is mainly the exorcism dance evolves the development unceasingly, opened the new world, caused it to grip the deep foundation in the populace, manifested its existence value. But, it receives religious and Confucianism as well as the different time, the different social class and so on witch, road, Buddha influence successively in the developing process, the content and formally already has reflects the masses desire and the request aspect, also has been doped the historical dregs, has the strong feudal superstition ingredient, many places Nuo have even become Taoism the carrier. Some sorcerer, the sorceress Nuo pray the early time the sacrificial offering ceremony which the god exorcises demons to change external appearances only, use for to be engaged in the feudal superstitious practice, has tarnished Nuo culture image, has caused modern Nuo culture several degrees declines. In the modern historical records and the local chronicle, the factor which is unsatisfactory to Nuo the culture also have the exposition and the critique. Therefore, we should abandon its dregs, takes its essence the manner, knows and the understanding Nuo culture original meaning, lets the ancient national culture glow the brilliance in the new historical period.

The exorcism dance was China ancient times big Nuo holds a memorial service for the ceremony dance, the later generation develops the entertaining folk dance gradually, widely current in places such as Jiangxi, Hunan, Hubei, Guizhou, Anhui, Shandong, Hebei. Each area has the different name: The ghost, jumps Nuo, name of various kinds of local drama and so on, also famous to jump the god. The exorcism dance characteristic is: Generally the wooden false face, plays the role makes the ghosts and gods dance, shows the performance god the life experience fact. The exorcism dance may divide into Wen Nuo on its performance form and military Nuo. The article Nuo movement scope is small. Performs carefully rigorous, the life breath is thick, movement plain grave, elegant free and easy, the play structure program is thick; Military Nuo movement intense forceful, rough bold, the imposing manner is dignified, mood open and bright bold, rhythm warm sprightly. The exorcism dance may divide into the solo dance, the dance for two people, three people according to the performance population to dance, the group dancing and the small ballet. The exorcism dance gives a performance mostly selects material the myth fable and the historical literary reference, the content richly colorful like performance expels evil spirits by the epidemic disease "Quarries a mountain", "Clock kui", the historical novel legend character "Double Primary Court attendant", "Turns off Public memorial ceremony Knife", the development agriculture culture complex "Otter Seizes Carp Essence", the performance honors worships graceful and the ancestor "Paper money", "the God of thunder", "Jumps Stool", the hope propitious safe "the God of Wealth", "Four

stars in the bowl of the big dipper", "And Gather", "Chicken Mouth", "Pig Mouth", has the reproduction worship "Nuo Male Nuo Husband's mother", has selects material from the folklore "Meng Jiangnyu Delivers Winter cloth", "the Bao Three Mothers And Flower Turns off Rope", performance fairy story "Ne zha", "Overflow Shahe", "Duke Guan" and so on. Take displays the God worship, the ancestor worship as the content exorcism dance. Movement rough agile and fierce, plain road vigor, both had the positive just beauty, and was rich in the romantic color, displayed primitive, naive, the clumsy plain religious emotion, the idea and the ideal. Other secularization exorcism dance's characteristic, take "near play, must really plays also" as the chief feature,

In the human common history, has experienced the nature worship, the totemism, the ancestor worship and the God worship stage, in spreads in until now exorcism dance performance, we saw what is the primitive worship and the life consciousness impulsion. The color gorgeous Nuo portrait, the modelling exaggeration Nuo the mask, the perspective will leave the primitive humanity heart's core deep sense of hardship and to the future happy pursue intense desire. Does not fade after several thousand years Nuo the culture. However, this mystical color's primitive dance and the folk art and many ancient cultural art are the same, are facing the impact which the modern civilization brings. These colorful original ecology resources while narrate ancestors story, is also undergoing the varying degree destruction. Manufactures in a rough way the replica spreads massively, because the genuine ancient mask actually cannot obtain protects effectively deteriorates, the harm. In some areas, Nuo culture transposition, is changing flavor, its academic value also comes under the influence. As one primitive cultural shape, the name of various kinds of local drama holds the unreplaceable link in the human history culture path, but protects, the research and the development Nuo culture, bears the brunt is protects cultural the original ecology. This means that the exorcism dance cannot be separated from their livelihood village soil, but only becomes the spiritless view prize. We should preserve them, lets it be vital, because in the exorcism dance has the deep historical trail which the too many ancient times humanities passed through.

#### References

- Han, Deming. (2006). *Altogether Dances with God - the Maonan national minority Nuo Culture Inspection Sacrifice*. Guangxi People's Publishing Agency.
- Liu, Jian. (2005). *Religion and Dance*. Nationality Publishing House.
- Yu, Ping. (2003). *Chinese and Foreign Dance Thought Generally*. People Music Publishing House.
- Zhang, Shumin. (2007). *View on Eastern Dance Park*. China Media University Publishing House.