



## **A Research Study Of Dance Formation Based On Cultural And Historical Memory Of The Old Luoyue Ethnic Group With Reference To Dance Drama “Walking Out Of Zushan Mountain”**

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### **Abstract:**

The old Luoyue ethnic group has beautiful and rich culture, which has huge impact not only on civilization of China, civilization of Southeast Asia but also on civilization of the entire world. Many carnivals and ceremonies are part of the Luoyue ethnic group which is a true reflection of its history and culture. Moreover, the celebrations and sacrificial ceremonies of this ethnic group reminds the real identity of Luoyue descendants. This paper will reflect on many dimensions of the Luoyue ethnic culture, such as dance of Luoyue culture, main elements of old Luoyue dance. In addition, it will shed light on the famous dance drama of Luoyue. The name of this drama is “Walkout of Zushan Mountain” which shows the importance and types of Luoyue dance. The findings of the study will assist readers to have complete knowledge about the Luoyue dance, and its enriched culture. The study will also provide new aspect for future study on Luoyue culture.

**Keywords:** OldLuoyue, Dance of Luoyue, History and Culture of Luoyue, Luoyue ethnic group

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## Introduction

Luoyue, is a name of an old tribe, which was present during 48 B.C and the Eastern Han Dynasty. It is the branch of Baiyue. In Southern China it centers on ethnic groups of Luoyue such as Dong and Zhuang in China (Liang, 2014). The culture of Luoyue had a huge impact on the creation and growth of the Southeast Asian and most specifically on the Chinese civilizations. The culture of Luoyue is considered as the root of

Many researchers argue that in past Luoyue ethnic group was located in Guangdong, southeastern Guizhou, northeastern China-Indochina Peninsula, Guangxi and other countries. The old Luoyue is well known because of the rice culture, dwelling culture, food culture, bronze culture, singing, medicine culture, sea culture, Dragon Mother Culture and ceramic culture. Due to the cultural inheritance and kinship across Zhuang occupied areas in central, western and southern Guangxi and northern Vietnam which is inhabited by Nung, Tau and Thai people. Luoyue culture is still preserved and acknowledged.

People living in Wuming district of Nanjing city in Guangxi, and in center of old Luoyue Empire is the true example of culture heritage, rituals and festivals of Luoyue culture, which reminds of the glorious old local regime. Luoyue has a significant historical and cultural origin of Luoyue descendent because people still enjoys folklore events and cultural festivals. Moreover, these folklore events and cultural festivals are the manifestation of the old Luoyue history, national confidence, culture, pride and it is also a need of time to keep all together and increase the unity among ethnic identities.

Dance is considered as an old way of communication than words and discourse (Yi, 2019). In old times,

Wuming. The culture of Luoyue is quite natural, old, and historical, therefore, it is shared by the

culture of Zhuang and Dong ethnic group along with that of Guangxi culture. As Luoyue ethnic group inherit and carry its old culture, therefore made it quite significant for the cultural growth of Guangxi and ethnic minorities in China.

people prefer body language of dance instead of words to communicate with each other for education purpose, to perform rituals and for the purpose of training. In short, dance can be considered as a key factor for the growth and development of human civilization. Dance in Luoyue is a cultural essence, cultural heritage, a different regional element and a historic cultural symbol.

The dance culture of Luoyue basically represents the rituals of Luoyue ancestors, worship and witchcraft ritual dances of primitive society. However, it is quite significant to add some innovation and advancement in the old Luoyue dance culture so that it can meet the need of new generation as well. Therefore, the demand of quality choreographers are increasing day by day. Choreographers have the responsibility to present dance with strong ability so that dance performance can achieve the emotional encouragement from the audience on spiritual level. This will lead audience and dancers to create great dance work with artistic magic (Gao, 2018).

To activate, inherit and reproduce Luoyue culture, it is important to create a dance based on cultural and historical values (Fan, 2016). It helps to inherit, invent, create and protect the intangible cultural legacy of various cultural groups such as Dong, Zhuang, Shui and



Li which belong to old Luoyue culture and history. With the help of dance dramas, this piece of writing will explore the significance and transformation of Luoyue dance culture. The findings of this study is entirely based on archaeology and documentaries. This study give theoretical back for the making of dance dramas to encourage Luoyue culture.

## 2. Objectives of the Research.

2.1 To shed light on the historical perspective of Luoyue culture and Luoyue dance.

2.2 To understand the importance of dance drama titled “Walking out of Zushan Mountain”.

## 3. Research procedure.

**3.1 Data collection.** The writer have collected the relevant data from the books and found data from the main Library of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, Nanning Library, Chongzuo Library and retrieved old and related papers from CNKI, Wanfang China Online journals, and China Academic Journals. However, to collect data on dance of Guangxi, Huashan, costumes, dance with music, copper drum, Zhaung brocade and semiotics, author has used historical literature. The above-mentioned sources helped a lot in writing this paper quite smoothly.

**3.2 Analysis of collected materials.** Through collecting materials from different sources such as old literatures, Journal articles and Library, the author had found much information about Luoyue culture. The author put much more effort and spent a lot of time

to find relevant and authentic data for Luoyue dance and Luoyue culture.

## 3.3 Interviews and observation.

As, the study centers about Zushan Mountain and Daming mountain, therefore, author had interviewed the head of the Guangxi Luoyue Cultural Research Association, Mr. Xie Shouqiu, Wei Wenbin from the Neichao village of Wuming District, Nanning City, Guangxi and from Institute of Ethnic Studies of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, author interviewed Qin Cailuan. In order to collect oral data related to Troop inspection by Dragon Mother, traditional ballads of Luoyue Kingdom and folk legends, and to know about the present status of inheritance and growth of culture of dance, the author visited Chongzuo Zhuang Museum, Ningming County Mass Culture Museum, and Guangxi Ethnic Museum. Moreover, to get complete detail about the dance it was not possible to do not focus on dance and music, therefore, the author keep a focusing eye on Guangxi song, theatre for dance and show of Flower Mountain which is a famous dance poem. To get into more detail, the author had interviewed choreographers, to deeply understand the history of dance, its source of inspiration, style, expression and the techniques which choreographers used to show Zhaung primitive dance on stage. The author also put a lot of emphasis on intangible cultural legacy of Zuojiang River Huashan rock painting, also investigated cliffs along the sides of river, took photographs of cliffs from riverbanks and recorded everything in detail. That is how, the author collected information regarding rock paintings.

## 4. Research results



#### 4.1 Sorting out dance elements

After collecting literature review, results of interviews and field observations, and the author has selected, screened and analyze many things such as rituals, dance images and dance scenes. Moreover, the findings of this study on Luodong dance is quite popular among audience in Luoyue region. As, the Luodong dance shows and exhibits perfectly about the national personalities of the Luoyue ethnic group therefore, it is quite famous. This dance includes various steps which represents the elements of worshipping, praying, and amusing gods, which reminds the viewers about the historical memory of their descendants.

The Luodong dance is usually performed by the Taoist master who wears masks while performing old Luoyue ritual dance in the memory of Zhaungancesters. This dance is in the roots of Luoyue because of its long history and it has passed on to generation by generation with deep emotions. The Luodong dance not only illustrates about the cultural and historical importance of the Luoyue culture but it also shows the aesthetic sense and interest of the people. During the Luodong dance, the dancer also add ritual scenes from the Zhaung ancestors which clearly exhibits the respect and love for the history and culture of Kingdom of Luoyue. It is the best way to preserve information regarding ancient Luoyue culture for the future generations. The dance of Luoyue can be assumed as a living fossil of culture and history of old Luoyue because it has greater research value specially in terms of inspecting troops, fighting, necromancy, marching, expedition and

exorcism elements of the Luoyue Kingdom.

Luodong dance includes many expressions such as communal dances, single dance performances and dance showers. Ring shape, horizontal formations, vertical formations and emanations are the combination forms of Luodong dance. Dancers take this dance as a worship, honor and do it with great zeal and zest to entertain gods, and for the prevention of disasters and for the blessings of god. Dancers enjoy while dancing because they consider it as a religious ritual. Along with dance activities there are also some sacrificial ceremonies, in which dancers and viewers were infected by the emotional and sacred scenarios and atmosphere is created the way both dancers and viewers feel sense of imitation and devote themselves wholeheartedly to dance. This not only show combine enjoyment for all but it also requires orderly steps, same rhythm and coordinated movements. For this, it is important to have same command, spirit and will to do dance wholeheartedly. In addition, group dances are source of national character, strength, tolerance, progress, preservation, unity, spirit and self-improvement. In group dances, everyone feel associated with each other, no one is single or individual everyone is transformed and united as a group. Consciously or unconsciously everyone represents ethnic group with their coordinated movements and steps. The Luodong dance make everyone united in a same ethnic group and make them enthusiastic to work for the same goal. Due to strong coordination and unity, this dance shows self-existence and self-expression of the individuals and it also reflects the presence of ethnic group. This dance is not only a source of training people to follow moments, steps



and discipline but it also train minds to reflect ethnic personality of Luoyue ethnic group in every possible way.

The author also observed form of performances, artistic elements of Luoyue dance such as hair combing dance, shoulder pole dance, shrimp catching dance and copper drum dance, through literature review, field observations, with intangible cultural heritage inheritors and interviews. The findings of the study shows that shigong dance is the main part along with shrimp catching dance, copper drum dance, shoulder pole dance and hair combing dance for the “Walking out of Zushan Mountain” dance drama.

## **4.2 The cultural implication of the drama “Walking out of Zushan Mountain”**

This dance is entirely based on culture, which not only add colors and charm to the dance but it also increases spiritual flavor in dancers. This shows that dance and Chinese culture are closely associated with each other (Yang, 2018). Beside amusement, ancient Luoyue have great contribution to human civilization, in terms of production of rice. The ancestors of Guangxi Luoyue used to live in Zushan Mountain and caves. They were completely dependent on hunting for their survival. When old Luoyue tribes grew with the passage of time, food shortage became main problem. In order to avoid this problem they start exploring down the mountains. Ancestors of Luoyue used to live near low latitude places, near Tropical Ocean, humidity because of rain, Tropical Ocean and high temperatures where there is a room for rice growth. Luoyue ancestors were near Lushui River, Youjiang River and Luoxing River down the mountains, to explore flat area to get large place for rice fertilization. People

usually went to mudflats to get small fishes, insects and rice ears. Therefore, Luoyue ancestors preferred to live in mudflats as it was most suitable place for rice cultivation. For the cultivation of rice, ancestors of Luoyue went down from mountains and started making boats for the rivers to move here and there to find more fertile place for rice cultivation. Thus, it lead to migration of “Walking out of Zushan Mountain”.

## **4.3 Main components of “Walking out of Zushan Mountain”**

### **4.3.1 Plot Plan**

The plot design consist of six main features such as, entrepreneurship by King Ya, Walking out of Zushan Mountain, killing Qin Shau, going far away, creating glory and exploring land for happiness.

#### **A. Search for the place of happiness**

Before, the Xia Dynasty in Central Plains, the Luoyue ancestors lived in places Zuojiang and Youjiang Rivers meet now. During Xia Dynasty, Luoyue people were forced to leave the place and move to highlands of Daming Mountain so that they can build up strength. After spending difficult time, they found a place named as “Garden of Eden” that was more appropriate for the cultivation of rice. Le and his Mother Visited the Horizon is a famous Zhaung mythological stories which truly reflects the history.

#### **B. Free enterprise by King Ya (Laopu). King Ya (Laopu) is also known as Luobo which means King Grandmother.**



She was the inherited king of Luoyue, who used to train people for taming tigers and snakes, to refine copper, create powerful Luoyue kingdom, open up water for fields, and casting swords. It is famous about her that after her death she was buried on moon with the help of sparrows. However, people also think that she was buried on Basui Mountain through trained snake “Tejue” with a tornado. This is even assumed to be a protector for the people of Luoyue. After her death she is known as Dragon Mother Goddess, the most powerful personality in Guangxi and Guangdong.

**C. Walking out of Zushan Mountain.** When the old Luoyue Kingdom became powerful, it started making strong dragon boats. Moreover, they BUILD built a huge convoy which was led by General of Luodong. The main purpose of this convoy was to move down the Daming Mountain along the Luoyue River to find the home which is near to river. To farewell the ancestral mountains, Luoyue people arranged a great ceremony and invited King Ya to investigate troops. They also suggested that on every piece of land where they will be living they will make a temple of King Ya. At that time, there were many Dawang Temple and Mother Dragon Temple which were

used to amuse ancient Luoyue people. In addition, to inspect troops sites like Pearl River were used. These sites are the main heritage of religious culture of Luoyue.

**D. Creating glory.** At the time of warring states rule, Luoyue Kingdom reaches to its full extent and they opened up waterways for Rivers such as Zuojiang and Youjiang, Xi River and Yue River. People of Luoyue also started routes for transportation from Hepu to Southeast Asia through sea. They also took developmental steps to increase cities in Hainan Island, Pearl River Basin and Red River Basin. Cities which were developed by Luoyue people includes Hepu, Gulo (Current Hanoi), Linpu (current Binyang), Bushan (present Guigang), Qiongya (Haikou), Cangwu (current Wuzhou area), Zengshi (Tiadong of present time), Xuwen.

**E. Killing Qin Shuai.** When six kingdoms get united, the first emperor of Qin, Qin Shi Huang took benefit of elephant teeth, emerald of Yue and rhinoceros horn and sent fifty thousand fighters to defeat Luoyue army and named the leader of soldiers as Yu Tusui which means general thrashing Zushan Mountain of Luoyue. After that Zushan Mountain was named as Basui and Daming



Mountain was renamed as Bashi. When army entered Lingnan, it captured Nanhai (current Guangzhou) defeated Xi'ou, and killed King Yi Yusong. However, when the army of Qin entered the land of Luoyue, the army faced huge resistance from the army of Luoyue. The people of Luoyue were not agree to surrender in front of Qin army therefore, they went to bushes and started living with beast. They choose Jie Jun as their leader and asked to attack Qin at night to defeat them. In this way they killed not only Yu Tusui but also killed thousands of people. The battle of Zushan is of greater importance in the history of Luoyue people. In the result of this battle, many people from Luoyue ethnic group has died. To acknowledge the sacrifices of those people who killed in Zushan battle, ghost festival is celebrated in July. To mourn the dead, an important element of Troop Inspection for Evoking Spirits was added in Luodong ritual dance which is famous in Daming Mountain.

**F. Going far away.** When Yu Tusui got defeated by Luoyue army, Qin shi Huang sent more soldiers to defeat army of Luoyue. These soldiers were known as Lang soldiers which means the soldiers of the king of Luoyue. Moreover, they give farewell to Zushan Mountain

and moved to Gulao (current Hanoi). After some time, they migrated to west and started living at current Laos and Thailand. They merge together with the local people and become ancestors of Zhaung-Thai people of Southeast Asia. In the memory of Zushan Mountain, elder people of Zhaung-Thai language believe on the ritual of returning their soul to Basui.

#### 4.3.2 Script Design

This script consist of five main acts such as, sailing away on the boat, resurrection of King Ya, Inviting spirits by Luodong, troop inspection by Dragon Mother and Meiniang dresses up.

**A. Inviting spirits by Luodong.** It is believed that Zushan Mountain is so high and its touching sky, the souls of ancestral gods are living there. The fairy mirrors transformed into a rainbow and good luck is spread over the earth. After sunrise, Gonglang and dancers of Luodong start moving their sound sticks and perform Trail-blazing dance. The Master Gonglang move the crowd towards the Temple of King Ya and hold rituals to beg spirit of King Ya to come. The grand master move towards cliff, rang bell and sang in loud voice "Lets welcome King Ya. Along with that Grand master sing old scriptures and Meiniang lay down and fell asleep slowly. The voice of grand master echoed in mountains and then Luodong put sleeping Meiniang on stage. This made people excited and they start shouting with excitement



that King Ya is back! Laopu is back!

**B. Dressing up Meiniang.** The crowd sang and welcome King Yainfront of his temple. The crowd already carried out Meiniang on stage. After that grand master started chanting in front of the temple of King Ya, the crowd sang and danced to welcome King Ya to earth. The crowd of Luodong had already carried Meiniang onto the stage, and the Grand Master started chanting and soul prayer puja. In Pilgrimage song, King Ya changed herself with female Wu Meiniang and then she stood up. Later, Luo immortals change her dress into a dragon suit and do makeup. After this, glowing King Ya came in front of people.

**C. Revival of King Ya.** People start calling Heron Fairy, King Ya came back to life. And then started dancing with excitement of King Ya. The soldiers and people of Luoyue sang and dance to welcome King Ya to platform where Troops can be inspected.

**D. Dragon Mother inspecting troops.** Luodong carries King Yato the stage for troop inspection and then sang old military song. After that King Ya started inspecting troops through moving banner. Luodong change face mask and start doing traditional horse dance and dance of inspecting troop so that the inspection of King Ya can be accepted. This is how, the Luoyue army became Lang soldier which means the part of

Kings Troop. These soldiers were having the military spirit and authority. Moreover, these soldiers have high morale to never lose any sort of battle in future.

**E. Sailing away on the boat.** Performance content: Ceremony ends when they leave mountain. People of Luodong waved 12 Dong flags on stage. Moreover, Yue drums rang beautiful sounds. The army of Luoyue started to form dragon boat. In addition, the bronze drum beat so fast that shows that dragon boat is formed and they start carrying King Ya away. After that, crowd started singing Faraway song.

#### 4.3.3 Formation and Combination Kinds of Dance Performances.

In Academia it is assumed that the figures of Huashan dance exhibits the true picture of rituals, life and production of Luoyue people (Chen, 1997). The dancers of Zuojiang rock painting shows the uniqueness of old Luoyue dance with the true essence of its history, shape, momentum and art that has been develop with the passage of time and passed on to future generation. For instance, in ZhaungShigong dance, the dancers bend on their knees and lean down to chest. Moreover, extension and flexion of knees is the most beautiful step of Shigong dance. However, in WumingZhaungShigong Dance, knees extend and flex, but the upper body of dancers sway a little that is inherited from the ancestors of Luoyue. Some academicians think that the steps such as pas de cheval and staccato steps of HechiShigong dance are exactly the same to rock painting dance (Chen, 1987).



That is why, due to the requirement of paper, the combination and formation of dance are based on arrangement and distribution of Huashan dance. There are four main kind of dance combinations

according to rock painting in Zuojiang River valley. These types include, circle, horizontal, solo and vertical dance combinations.



宁明花山岩画横向舞蹈队形



宁明花山岩画横向舞蹈队形图

Image1 Flower Mountain rock paintings having horizontal formation of dance  
Image 2 The horizontal dance formation in a Ningming.

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#### A. Horizontal dance formation.

The horizontal formation of dance is the commonly used dance formation that is used by many dancers. Specifically it can be practiced in areas such as Longzhou County (Upper side of Zuojiang River), on both sides of Mingjiang River at Ningming county, in county Fusui and in Jiangzhou district. This dance is performed in a horizontal way, the taller dancer leads the dance and the shorter were on the left and right side of the leader. The horizontal dance combination is almost same like that of star holding the moon but the major difference is of former image that is arranged in horizontal way, however, the latter one is arranged in a circular way.

**B. Vertical Dance formation.** In rock paintings of Zuojiang River valley, vertical dance formation is also used frequently. That is because of the fact that at that specific time, paintings could be expressible only in two-dimension relation. Therefore, at that time, the vertical dance combination was only used to express up and down. The below-mentioned diagrams can show the vertical arrangement which have no tall person in center. Space between the each performer varies and few can be seen in the form of pyramids. It can be seen in small areas and they have less in groups and in numbers.





Image 3 Circular Dance Combinations  
 Image 4 Laishan Dance Combination  
 Image 5 Solo Dance formation

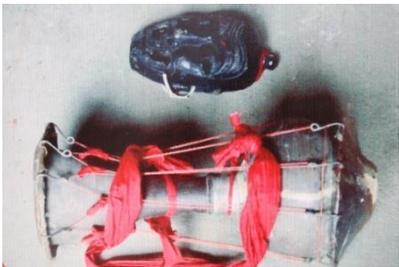
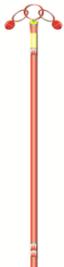
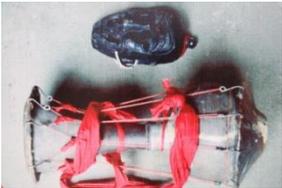
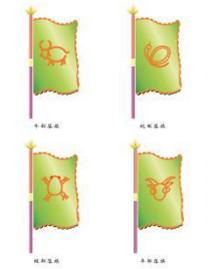
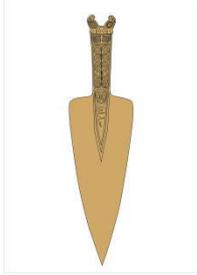
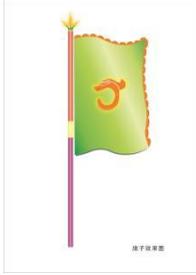
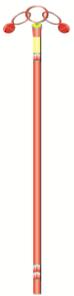
**C. Circle Formation.** The circular form of dance can be seen on a larger level with more dancers. High Mountain and Flower Mountain are the best examples of this dance formation. This dance formation can be seen at Mingjian River of Ningming County, Triangle Rock in Longzhou District, in Miangjiang Flower Mountain, cave Mountain in Jiangzhou District, Tunping Mountain in Fusui County, and Hua Mountain in Daxin County. These pictures are wide for example, the painting in Balai Mountain in Fusui County is almost 15 m high whereas it is 4.5 meters in its width. In center, the tall dancer is always present with the sword in his left hand, a hanging blade from waist, a canine at his feet and a bird on his head. Moreover, shorter dancers are arranged in left and right side. Bronze drum along with hexagram inside the feet of one person is always present on left side.

The whole image includes a solid layout, well defined structure and indistinct priorities. Second painting was of High Mountain of Ningming County. It was 5 meters high, and 10 meters of width. It was having more than 80 different pictures. In the painting it was shown that tall dancer was in center and he is having sword-shaped thing in its right hand and bronze drum in his left hand. Moreover, there was running dog at the bottom in his feet, and there were more dancers in front and both sides of picture. This sort of dance combination give an artistic touch to the picture which shows flexibility in dance. In Huashan rock painting, “STAR HOLDING THE MOON” give a beautiful representation of this combination of dance. This was the way of worship in old Luoyue. However, it was also used for the troop inspection by Dragon Mother.

**D. Solo dance.** In this type of dance the dancer appears alone on the screen and it is different from combined dance images. Images shows that there are three main kinds of solo dance. First image shows the only one dancer that appears on screen in rock painting some rock paintings it was shown that there were other dancers too in the wide screen but all were performing alone far away from each other, with no direct relationship. Third picture shows that there are some kind of combination but all dancers were far away from each other with no direct relationship, and they were alone at corner.



### 4.3.4 Layout design for stage

Inviting souls by Luodong	Bee drum		Sacrifice rings and stave	
				
Dressing up Meiniang.	Bee drum	Flag of Tribe		Comb for Meiniang
				
The arrival of King Ya	Holding a pot of aroma in hands	Sacrificial prayers	Flag of Signal	Dress of Dragon Mother for battles
				
Dragon Mother inspecting troops	Flag of signal	Signal sword	Golden flag of tribe	Sacrifice stave
				
Sailing	Copper drum		Face mask	Flower Mountain



away on the boat			mural symbol 
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### 5. Conclusion and Recommendation

Walking out of Zushan Mountain shows people unity and harmony which is the true essence of the Luoyue culture. It shows that there is a huge influence of Luoyue culture on the dances such as Tong Drum dance, Huashan rock painting, Luodong dance and MahuaGuai dance. These dance performances clearly give beautiful and new expression to the old Luoyue culture. Luoyue dance culture is quite rich in its nature and it is having unique artistic touch. However, to preserve this culture for future generation is important. Therefore, this paper suggests that there is a need of clear categorization of Luoyue culture. Secondly, the government should also take measures to put forward policies in order to protect this heritage. Thirdly, legislative measures should be strong enough to protect the dance culture of Luoyue. Lastly, it is important to maintain relationship with the local descendants of Luoyue.

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