

# A Brief Analysis of the Role of Primitive Religion in the Traditional Oroqen Dance\*

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**Abstract**—Traditional Oroqen dance has been transformed with the changes of social production, lifestyle and social ideology when it continued to develop to now. However, the essence of the nation still exists, which has not been changed. The Shaman ritual forms and movements of the original religious dance style are mixed with their hunting actions and living production habits. After the baptism of the long history, due to the improvement of people's production and living standards and improvement of the people's cultural literacy, the demand for national culture has also changed. The Oroqen national traditional dance gradually evolved from the original style to the current ancient Gulun Muta, which was passed down and carried forward by generations. The traditional dance of Oroqen has regional and territorial characteristics and has a unique national culture. It has not only retained the ideology of primitive religion, but also reflects the beautiful yearning for today's life and the development of China's excellent traditional culture.

**Keywords**—religion; traditional dance; role

## I. INTRODUCTION

Religion is an ideology that is constantly formed along with social development, which is the product of social development. The belief in religion is based on people's spiritual sustenance for a better life. It prevails in every historical period and exists as a social culture. As an important part of Oroqen's primitive religion, it continues the original ideology of the Oroqen national religion and expresses the people's good yearning for production and life in Oroqen. As a carrier to serve the development of society, nature is the inevitable product when religious ideology developed to a certain stage.

## II. THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGION

The word "religion" in Chinese comes from Buddhism: what the Buddha said is 教 (teaching), and what his disciples said is 宗 (sect of teaching), which are collectively called religion, generally referring to Buddhist teachings. Most of China's textbooks use the relevant classics of Marx and Engels: Marx said: "Religion is the opium of the people."

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Engels' *Anti-Duhring* said, all religions are merely the reflection of the external forces that dominate people's daily lives in people's minds. In this reflection, human power takes the form of superhuman power. They all analyze the essence of religion." Ci Hai" defines religion: "One of all forms of religious ritual is worshipping the natural gods, which is the distortion and illusory reflection of natural forces and social forces in people's rituals."

With the continuous development and progress of society, people's production and life have changed, and the response forms of religion in different periods are also different. It is mainly divided into primitive religion, national religion, and world religion and so on. The primitive religion is also known as the tribal religion, the religion of the ancient times and the religion of the uncivilized society, such as nature worship, elf worship, totem worship, witchcraft and so on. National religion, also known as ethnic religion, refers to religions popular in certain regions such as tribes, nationalities, and countries, including the Shrine Shinto in Japan, Hinduism in India, Judaism in Israel, Taoism and Confucianism in China. It is closely related to the social customs, habits, and systems of the region in which it is located. It does not necessarily have a religious ancestor or a classic to be based on. For example, the Japanese Shinto has no specific teaching, but is based on primitive religion and develops according to the state organization. Another example is the Taoism of China, which has its own specific ancestors, and has its own special teaching style suitable for the tradition of the people. Therefore, it is difficult to pass on to other countries. World religions include Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, etc. This type of religion is accepted according to the free will of the individual, so they obey the creed, ritual, and commandments within the organization.

## III. THE INFLUENCE OF PRIMITIVE RELIGION ON THE TRADITIONAL OROQEN DANCE

Religious dance is an important form in primitive religious art, which is closely related to the various needs of human spiritual life such as seeking rain, drought resistance, making exorcism, eliminating epidemics, welcoming the gods, and sending gods. Religious dance is the product of the development of religious communication. It directly reflects the form of social development and expresses the emotional color of religion through dance forms, expressing the

relationship and connection between religious people and God. The traditional Oroqen dance not only has religious cultural and artistic expression techniques, but also contains the unique charm of national culture. The traditional dance culture of Oroqen is embodied in the myths related to religion and in the lyrics of the gods. In particular, the sacred songs jumping to by the Shaman are mostly passed down orally, and their lyrics reflect both the national culture and the way of life. The traditional Oroqen dance also expresses a high degree of worship for nature, which is directly related to the production and life style of the Oroqen nationality and the process of social development. Because of their excessive dependence on the natural environment, they rely entirely on natural divine power to solve their own difficulties, so the traditional dances of the early Oroqen period were mostly the products of religious ideology, mainly represented by the Oroqen shaman dance.

The Oroqen Shaman Dance is a form of dance that expresses religious ideology. It is mainly manifested in the high worship of nature, the possession of the gods, the reinvention of a god image, and the power of super mystery. Shaman sorcerers embody the forms of dance in activities such as praying for gods, offering sacrifices, exorcising evil spirits, and treating diseases, which shows the connotation of primitive religions that worship all things and totem worship. In the strict sense, the shaman dance is not a performance dance. It expresses people's activities in praying for gods, offering sacrifices, exorcising evils, and healing diseases in a form of dance and songs. Shaman dances are mostly asked by people, for clan rituals or for the treatment of patients. There are also some wealthy people inviting Shaman to dance to bless their home business for the gods, or to hunt more prey. Whenever you jump, the host family will inform relatives and friends to help in advance, and the people who hear the news come to see the fun with family. The dance of the gods is carried out at night. As soon as the sun sets, the host family will have a bunch of bonfires in front of their homes. People who participate in the activities will sit around the campfire. When night falls, the shaman puts on the god coat and the god hat, walks to the campfire with the drums and drumsticks, closes his eyes and begins to ask God slowly. The performance characteristics are as follows: First, the head movements are diversified. In the Oroqen traditional dance, the head movements are numerous and show the diverse characteristics. In the dance, sometimes head is kept up, sometimes they shake head and swing the neck, sometimes the head is high and sometimes is low. Every movement makes people feel rich connotation and has a variety of meanings. Every action seems to convey different dance content. Because Oroqen traditional dance is often associated with religion, it is full of deep "divine". For example, the posture of looking up is the god looking up to the sky, and talking to the God; the posture of bowing is to imitate the gods who look down on the creatures and observe everything. Especially, it is embodied in the dance through the use of head ornaments. Most of the headwears are decorated with antlers that are sacred creatures for the Oroqen people, which can play a role in communicating with God. Secondly, masks are used frequently. Oroqen folk dances often use masks, mainly including animals and

totems. Each has many different types, and the type of mask used is determined by the activity of the dance. For example, in the sacrificial dance, the mask of the deer is used. By wearing a mask, the artistic content of the dance can be enhanced, which is also the biggest feature of the Oroqen traditional dance; third, the gesture changes subtle. Oroqen traditional dance pays particular attention to gesture changes, including wrists, joints, fingers, and the overall stretch of the hand. This change is particularly frequent and subtle in different types of dance activities and different movements. For example, the straightness of the finger represents God's will. The God is conveying his own command; pointing finger upwards means following the command of God. At this time, the dance should be neat, showing a quiet obedience atmosphere, and subtle changes in gestures represent the rich inner religious feelings of the Oroqen people. In addition, it makes the audience feel dynamic because of its strong influence; finally, the presentation of form is richer. The shaman dancers' legs are tightly closed, present horse stance, or bent into a ring. Each movement change represents different meanings. The dance is mostly a simulation of the live state of the birds and beasts. Sometimes, people simulate animals, sometimes act as a god, and sometimes they changed back to ordinary people. Some express the divine power, some show the supernatural power and some show a thrilling live expression that can compete with nature. According to religious etiquette procedures, they sing when dancing. The movements are mostly the ensemble sounds of drums, bells, and hits. After constantly rotating and changing various postures, the effect of supernatural power possessed by the gods is achieved. In short, the Oroqen traditional dance, Shaman dance is a kind of belief ceremony of primitive religion, which embodies the longing for the beautiful life of the Oroqen people, and is also the product of hunting national life and primitive religion.

#### IV. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRIMITIVE RELIGION AND TRADITIONAL OROQEN DANCE

Shamanism was originated in ancient times. According to historical records, shamanic ancestors in ancient northern China, such as Su Shen, Xiongnu, Wuheng, Xianbei, Rouran, Tujue, Uighur, Huishun, Xiagasi, etc., all had primitive religious activities related to shamanism. The Shamanism later developed into a religion generally believed by the Altaic peoples living in northern China, which had or still had the hunting and nomadic economic life. The Shaman is a general term for shamanic wizard, originated from the Tungusic language "the dancing people who are excited and crazy." The names of the shamans (wizard) are different, but they are all trained to master various magic arts and techniques. In the long history and social life, as a product of hunting culture, the primitive religious belief is a very important spiritual and cultural phenomenon of the Oroqen people. It penetrates into the spiritual field of every Oroqen people. The characteristics of traditional religious beliefs are natural worship concepts, simple awareness of nature protection, the unique cognition and form of worship for the sky, the sun, the moon, and the stars, advocating animism, respecting nature, and pursuing animal worship, totem worship, and ancestor worship. In the early life of the

Oroqen people, shaman dance presented a very important social role as a religion. The shaman presided over religious rituals to pray for the people, prevent disasters, and pray for the gods to bless the peace and health, to worship the gods, heal the illness, and relieve the mental pain and confusion. Since Oroqen people live in such regional ecological environment, it can only form an ideology that is compatible with the environment. This ideology invisibly affects the social development and naturally affects the dance culture in category of spiritual culture and art. Although the reflected forms or expressed symbols are different, it is in any case a product of social development. Because no art is created without foundation, it is rooted in the related "ecological environment", "living method", "social organization", and "religious belief", and presents daily life and religious characteristics and reflects the cultural implications at a higher and deeper level.

#### V. CONCLUSION

In short, religion is an ideology, as well as a product of people's life and production, which affects all aspects of social life. Oroqen traditional dance is a way of showing social culture, and naturally is inextricably linked with primitive religion. Religion affects the form of dance development, and dance is a reflection of the form of religious rituals. The religion decides the dance form, so it is said that religion is inseparable from dance art, and dance art needs to be perfected and developed in the process of religious development, so as to form the dance form that serves religion, and achieve the effect of spreading religious culture. It can be reckoned that the Oroqen traditional dance was originated from the primitive religion and served the primitive religion, of which the original form was a religious ceremony.

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