

Dance Postures: Expressions of the Body

Dianhuai Shen^{1,a,*}

¹*Dance Research Institute, Taipei National University of the Arts, Beitou District, Taipei City, Taiwan, China*

a. 522401201@qq.com

**corresponding author*

Abstract: In his speech at the opening ceremony of the “Tenth National Congress of the Chinese Literary and Art Circles,” General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized that literature and art have been bestowed with abundant nourishment and boundless imaginative space by history. However, writers and artists should not indulge in unfounded imagination when depicting history, nor should they render history void. While it may not be possible to fully recreate the true essence of history, writers and artists have the responsibility to reveal the real historical facts and convey the most valuable elements of history... Only by establishing a correct view of history, respecting history, and presenting historical events in accordance with artistic principles can we stand the test of history, be recognized in the contemporary era, and be passed on to future generations. In comparison, dance, as an integral part of the arts, distinguishes itself from other art forms through its unique “aesthetics of the body” and “body expression.” Within this, the “aesthetic value” and “expressive communication” are dynamically linked between dance postures. Thus, dance postures play a vital role as carriers in dance. Based on this, the thesis re-examines the etymology and definitions of “dance” and “posture” and traces their origins. Drawing upon the research theory of semiotics in dance, it aims to elucidate that dance postures represent the simultaneous expression of body and mind, uniting them through bodily warmth and ethereal force. Similarly, dance postures serve as the dynamic connection between “ecology” and “mentality” under their physical manifestation. They should be placed within the two major systems of “dance historical and cultural morphology” and “dance artistic creative morphology,” exploring them in-depth, in detail, mutually supporting each other, and facilitating development. This construction establishes two intersecting and parallel axes, thereby respecting the laws of historical and artistic development, promoting culture, distinguishing aesthetics, and passing them on to future generations.

Keywords: dance postures, expression, ethereal force, stylization principle, vitalization principle

1. Introduction

Broadly speaking, whether dance is regarded as an art form or a cultural expression, it is always embodied through the physical form of life as its material carrier. Accordingly, the “essence” of dance is in its “movements,” as movements represent the abstract nature of this “species” of art and serve as the concrete medium of its expression. “Movements themselves encompass eight ‘original forms’:

matter (the human body), consciousness (the command received by the mover), time, space, quantity, quality (force, skill), motion, and value (symbolic significance).” [1] As such, movements, as the concrete presence of dance, embody both form and symbolic meaning, forming the language of dance and accomplishing its expression.

Generally, dance movements are derived from and elaborated upon the basis of human’s natural life movements. The processing and refinement of these human actions endow dance movements with rhythmic characteristics and bestow upon them the mission of sculptural creation. The sculptural nature of dance movements forms the foundation of its aesthetic value, distinct from the static forms found in other visual arts. Dance, being a dynamic interconnection of postures, movements, and sculptural frames, evolves through the interplay of four-dimensional space (points, lines, planes). Thus, dance is often described as a “living painting” and a “flowing sculpture.” This paper primarily explores the “dynamic sculptural forms” of dance, specifically the postures of human dance movements (hereafter referred to as “dance postures”). In a sense, dance postures refer to the aesthetic values given to dance forms by humans. In other words, dance postures are a “meaningful form” that embodies the symbolic expression of a certain era’s social and cultural symbolism and corresponds to the aesthetic psychological structure of that era. As semiotician Susan Leigh Foster puts it, “All dance movements are postures or elements of postures.” [2] Thus, dance postures reveal the internal psychological structure through the forms of movement. They are based on aesthetic categories and embody certain subjective aesthetic concepts of dance forms. The term “subjective” is used because the aesthetic value of dance exhibits various phenomena and objects, which determines that its aesthetic criteria are not singular. Yet, the aesthetic essence behind these phenomena is unified, arising from different aspects such as the historical process of human society, regional cultural characteristics, and the subjective consciousness of active responses. In other words, dance postures themselves do not have a direct factual relationship with the social symbolic objects they are endowed with; rather, they are assigned and fictionalized through human’s subjective aesthetic ideas. As philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel stated in “Philosophy of Right,” “When examining the concept of value, one should regard the thing itself as a mere symbol, not for what it is, but for what it represents.” [3] In summary, dance postures should be explored from the perspective of aesthetic value. They are dependent on history, society, nature, and social practices, as well as individual consciousness, subjectivity, individuality, and creative expression. That is to say, dance postures and their expressions encompass both a representational aspect of social life and natural ecology and an expressive aspect of individual subjective emotions. Thus, this paper is based on the research theory of dance morphology proposed by Yu Ping, exploring dance postures and their expressions through the two dimensions of dance morphology, namely the “principle of stylization” and the “principle of vitalization.” Based on this, the paper aims to elucidate that dance postures represent a simultaneous expression of body and mind, uniting them through the warmth and ethereal force of bodily forms. Similarly, dance postures function as the dynamic connection between “ecology” and “mentality” under the morphological framework. Therefore, dance postures should be positioned within the two major systems of “dance historical and cultural morphology” and “dance artistic creative morphology,” delving deeply, in detail, mutually supporting each other, and facilitating development, thus co-constructing the “ethereal force” realm of the body.

2. Literature Review

From a semantic perspective, the term “舞姿” (dance postures) places emphasis on “姿势” (posture), and it falls within the realm of dance, specifically referring to the postures in dance. To clarify the concept of dance postures, it is first necessary to define what dance is. However, the question of what dance is presents both ease and difficulty. It is easy because dance phenomena are ubiquitous in the world, and people can easily recognize and understand them. It is difficult because the essence of

dance is profound, and it cannot be fully summarized in a few words.

Firstly, concerning the record of pictographic characters, the characters “巫” and “舞” share the same origin until the differentiation of seal script. In oracle bone script, “舞” appears as a person holding a flower branch. In later stages, alongside oracle bone script, there emerged the phenomenon of extending the length of the branch held by the hand, as well as the appearance of a “square mouth” shape atop the head. These elements were present during ritualistic performances where individuals swung flower branches while chanting prayers. In bronze script, the character “舞” clearly shows the separation of the flower branch from the hand, with the flower branch balanced by the “口” (mouth) character. Some bronze script variants add the “辵” (proceeding) radical, emphasizing the ritualistic nature of dance while moving. Based on the foundation of bronze script, seal script further developed the character “舞” by adding the “亡” radical, which carries the meaning of “falling in battle.” This emphasizes the significance of “fallen warriors” in dance ceremonies. In clerical script, the character’s form underwent more significant changes, with the human and hand components disappearing. As the cited references suggest, it is evident that the integration of “口” and “亡” has given the character “舞” different functional aspects in prayers and rituals. Furthermore, through the evolution and development of the character’s form, from the “double hands” in oracle bone script, the “辵” (proceeding) in bronze script, the “双足” (double feet) with “舛” in seal script, to the disappearance of the human and hand components in clerical script, it demonstrates the transition in human understanding of dance from a single joint to a composite whole. Finally, this culminates in a unified bodily expression with the eradication of human and hand components. Thus, it reflects the ancient perception of dance gradually transforming from concrete and realistic to abstract and metaphorical. Based on the aforementioned literature, it is apparent that the ancient understanding of the essence of dance centered on the body’s ritual functionality and the body serving as the material carrier of dance.

Secondly, ancient literary works have preserved the definitions of dance by scholars of the time. In “Yueji, Yueshang,” it is recorded: “Virtue is the essence of one’s nature, and music is the brilliance of one’s virtue. Golden stones, silk, bamboo, and wood are musical instruments. Poetry conveys one’s aspirations, singing expresses one’s sound, and dance displays one’s countenance. These three elements originate from the heart, and then joyous energy follows.” In “Ruan Ji’s Collected Works, Essay on Music,” it is recorded: “Therefore, songs express one’s aspirations, and dance conveys emotions. Then they are heard and collected, praised for their brilliance, and appreciated through the eight sounds, encompassing harmony.” In “Liji, Tanguang Pian,” it is recorded: “When people are happy, they dance and sing; when they dance, they move freely; when they move freely, they get angry; when they get angry, they grieve; when they grieve, they sigh; when they sigh, they leap and jump.” In “Baihu Tong, Lile Pian,” it is recorded: “Why is singing an essential element in music? Because singing is verbal expression, and it brings joy to the heart. The mouth desires to sing, the hand desires to dance, and the feet desire to leap.” In “Yuelv Quanzhu, Lvlu Jingyi,” it is recorded: “The ‘Shi’ preface states: ‘The song is not enough, but it desires the hands to dance, and the feet to leap. This is the joy that arises from music.’” According to the above references, (1) they discussed dance as a means of emotional release, endowing dance with the function of emotional expression. (2) The ancient scholars did not entirely distinguish poetry, music, and dance as separate entities, viewing dance as the visual (countenance) representation of music. This indirectly influenced the classification of dance as a visual art form.

Thirdly, spanning thousands of years of history, contemporary scholars have built upon the experience of their predecessors and further explored and studied the concept of dance, gradually forming a scientific classification. Wen Yiduo, in his essay “On Dance,” stated: “Dance cannot be separated from the following four aspects: (1) Using a comprehensive form to mobilize life. (2) Using

the essence of rhythm to express life. (3) Emphasizing the practical significance of life. (4) Ensuring life through social functions.” [4]. Although he succinctly emphasizes the comprehensiveness, rhythmic nature, and practical functionality of dance, they all focus on the underlying value of life. Wu Xiaobang, a dancer, emphasized in his “Introduction to New Dance Art” (revised and published in 1982): “Dance is the organized and regular movement of the human body, observing and analyzing nature and society, reflecting characters, expressing life, thoughts, and emotions through form and technique.” [5]. Dancer Liang Lun emphasized: “Dance is an art form that excels in expressing emotions, conveying ideas through emotional expression. Similarly, when the audience appreciates dance works, they do so by resonating with the emotions presented in the performance. Dance places a stronger emphasis on expressing emotions than other art forms such as music and poetry.” [6]. Li Zehou, in his essay “A Brief Discussion of Art Categories,” emphasized: “Dance is the use of bodily postures and movements to express human subjective emotions.” He further explored the aesthetic characteristics of dance as an art form. The “Dictionary of Chinese Dance” published in the 1990s, based on the “Cihai” (1979 edition), emphasizes dance as follows: “Dance uses the human body, different from other art forms, as an elevated form of expression for the human spirit. Dance images are composed through the contradictions of emotions, thoughts, society, and nature. They express the aesthetic emotions and ideals of dance creators (choreographers and performers) and reflect the aesthetic attributes of life. Dance is created through the process of human body movements, postures, flowing formations, music, and stage design, taking place in time and space. Dance is a dynamic art form with aesthetic form, spatiality, temporality, and comprehensiveness. Dance originated from the imitation and representation of labor production, combat training, sexual activities, totem worship, and emotional expression. It is one of the earliest art forms in human history. Dance serves various social functions, such as aesthetics, entertainment, and physical fitness.” [7].

Based on the above literature review, researchers analyze the following points: (1) Dance is a way of expressing meaning through bodily rhythms. (2) They all directly or indirectly acknowledge that life is the driving force of dance, as thinking, action, and life are inseparable. (3) Dance is closely intertwined with society, ecology, mentality, and other spatiotemporal aspects. (4) Dance is a reflection of the spiritual world, with both representational and expressive elements, with emphasis on the expressive aspect. (5) Dance has diverse social functionalities. In summary, based on the interpretations of dance by ancient and modern scholars, it is evident that whether in terms of ideas or emotions, connections with the outside world, or expressions of social functions, they all require interpretation through bodily movements, postures, and action processes to be manifested. In other words, similar to what semioticians say, “Man is an animal of symbols. They not only create symbols but are the only higher animals with symbolization and use symbols for self-expression.” Similarly, as Susan Langer put it, “Art is the creation of symbolic forms of human emotion.” Therefore, dance achieves its various aspects of existence through the dynamic connection between dance postures.

From the perspective of character etymology, “姿” is a form-semantic character. In Xiaozhuan script, it is derived from “女” (woman) with the second tone. After the Li script period, it was written as “姿” in regular script. The original meaning of “姿” is posture, referring to facial expressions, demeanor, appearance, and style. It represents the appearance presented by objects or the expression of artistic connotations in poetry, prose, calligraphy, and painting, as well as style and demeanor. After consulting multiple dictionaries, “姿” is also interpreted as gracefulness and talent.

Firstly, speaking of the interpretation of “姿态,” in the “Later Han Book - Biography of Zang Hong,” it states, “Hong had a robust and extraordinary appearance.” In Ruan Ji’s poem “Yong Huai,” it says, “Bending and circling, the demeanor worries my heart.” In the “A New Account of the Tales of the World - Praise and Acclaim,” it describes, “Uncle’s appearance is exquisite, his actions are like lingering, no other famous riders can surpass him.” In the “Language Forest,” it narrates, “At first,

Wen was sent to encourage and support, and the Prince of Jin gathered a large number of guests to see him. When Lord Wen first entered, his appearance was quite rough, and everyone was amazed when they sat together.” In the “Ode to the Qin,” it describes, “Rich and abundant with various postures, skilled from the beginning to the end.” In “Flowers and Moon Scars,” it portrays, “Her appearance is delicate and charming, her beauty seems boneless, abundant as if there is surplus.” In “An Ode to Lord Li Hu,” it expresses, “However, he believes that it is too humble and trivial in form, lacking in power and momentum; if there is no demeanor, one will fall into vulgarity.” In Su Shi’s “A Letter in Response to the People’s Teacher,” it states, “Both literary and logical elements arise naturally, and one’s demeanor is distinctive.” The above ancient texts are all taken in this context.

Secondly, speaking of the interpretation of “*娇容*,” in the “Later Han Book - Biography of Yuan Shao,” it mentions, “Yuan Shao’s later wife favored her stepson, frequently praised him to Yuan Shao, who was also impressed by his appearance, desiring to make him the heir.” In the “Book of Liang - Biography of Wang Mao,” it describes, “His appearance was extraordinary and beautiful, with eyebrows and mustache like a painting.” In the “History of the Song Dynasty - Annals of Emperor Zhenzong Volume 1,” it records, “He was young, intelligent, and his appearance was particularly outstanding.” In the “Fifty Rhymes for Reminiscing about the Eastern Journey,” it writes, “Spirit spirited like an old crane, her demeanor charming like a hidden dragon.”

Furthermore, speaking of qualifications and talents, in the “Han Book - Biography of Gu Yong,” it states, “Your Majesty possesses a natural disposition, open-minded and attentive, the essence of a ruler.” In the “Records of the Three Kingdoms - Wu Zhi - Biography of Lu Kai,” it says, “Some are pure, loyal, and diligent, while others are outstanding in talent and ability, all pillars of the state.” In the “Biography of Lu Su,” it mentions, “My lord, with his outstanding talent, is especially suited for the present day.” In the Southern Song Dynasty, Liu Yiqing’s “A New Account of the Tales of the World - Discernment” records, “Yifu was at that time the chief of the total angle, with extraordinary and outstanding talent.” Yan Shigu’s annotation explains, “*姿* means talent.” In the Later Han Dynasty, Ma Rong’s “Ode to the Flute” says, “Only the flute, by virtue of its innate disposition and unchanged material, when cut and blown, produces such a sound.”

In summary, whether “*姿*” signifies a modal aspect, a beautiful appearance, or inherent talent, its fundamental meaning emphasizes the state of being “both in form and spirit.” Undoubtedly, in the context of dance, “*姿*” not only refers to the state of “both in form and spirit,” but it also emphasizes the meaning of posture in the process of expressing the state of things. This is because dance employs the human body as its instrument to manifest a dynamic process that integrates both the physical and spiritual aspects. Through human symbolic movements, dance interprets the multiple dimensions of its diverse “definitions.”

3. Body Expression

Regarding the reference between “everyday postures” and “dance postures,” there are both connections and differences. The connections are as follows: 1. Both are movement processes driven by the body’s head, spine, and limbs. 2. Both are influenced by physiological, psychological, purposeful, and functional factors. 3. Both have a significant role in conveying meaning. The differences lie in the fact that “everyday postures” are a form of “daily” behavior, while “dance postures” represent something “non-daily.” The former’s “daily” aspect comes from being a natural state centered around life, using bodily postures to indicate intentions through signals. On the other hand, the latter is a kind of fictional posture, not just a signal but a meaningful symbol. For example, in the bone-chilling winter, an old man waits anxiously on a street bench for a meeting with a friend, huddled up. This huddled posture is a “daily” state influenced by ecology and mentality, not a dance expression. In other words, to extract the anxious emotion and huddled motion of the old man, detach

them from their concrete reality, and represent them in a fictional way is to create a non-daily dance posture. Therefore, dance postures are not only illusory but also represent a fictional manifestation of vitality. As Susan Langlois said, “The fundamental illusion of dance is a realm of illusory power—not the power generated by reality and the body, but the power and action created by fictionalized postures.” [2]

Considering the above, it is more accurate to say that the “body” in dance is a representation of a bodily illusion rather than a signal transmission. In this regard, the expression of dance postures not only involves the muscular awareness but also the overall visual composition. Thus, the illusory power of dance postures is composed of the expressions of “kinesthetic” and “visual.” The bodily perceptions under emotional perception have “presence” and multiplicity, and the dance postures under the influence of visual authority have “objectivity” and “symbolism.” Consequently, the expression of dance postures carries uncertainty and ambiguity—for both the viewers and the performers. Whether it is each dance or each dance posture, they embody diverse dance meanings connected to ecology and mentality. As a result, researchers center around “human existence” and focus on the common “ecology” and “mentality” of humans. Through the systematic study of “stylization principles” and “vitalization principles” proposed by Yu Ping, they further explore the illusory construction of dance postures.

The “stylization principle” and “vitalization principle” come from Yu Ping’s work “Dance Morphology.” He referred to the historical research of “stylization principles” as “dance historical-cultural morphology.” He believed that this research embodies two distinct features: “temporality” and “stylistic nature.” “Stylistic nature” always develops in conjunction with the process of “temporality.” That is to say, when studying a specific dance’s historical and cultural form, one must grasp its inherent principles through the evolution and development of temporality to explore its historical and cultural essence. [8] Yu Ping labeled the predictive research of the “vitalization principle” as “dance artistic creative morphology.” This research also encompasses two distinct features: “synchronicity” and “vitality.” It belongs to the predictive research of dance morphology because it is based on the dancer’s mentality and changes in that specific period or even at the present moment. Such dance forms are determined by the life forms under dynamic changes. As emphasized by Yu Ping, these life forms are “organic whole forms,” “self-sufficient forms,” and “growing and evolving forms.” Therefore, researchers use these two principles to study the body’s “dance postures” and their “expression.” They are two essential pathways for dance posture expression, both involving aspects of “natural ecology” and “social mentality.” However, the former emphasizes “ecology” more, representing long-term stability under ecological influences, while the latter emphasizes “mentality” more, focusing on the present’s changes, with uncertainty and impermanence.

3.1. Stylization Principle

The selection of the stylization principle allows for a deeper analysis of the cultural core behind the dance postures, as it enables researchers to place themselves in the specific changes of historical culture. This approach departs from the narrow view that treats traditional movements purely as “unchanging traditions.” Guided by the spirit of the historical cultural core, it comprehensively grasps the construction of body styles under temporal evolution and development. In a sense, dance postures are similar to language; they serve as the outer shell of thoughts and express the inner world of the human spirit. Through the illusory power of the body (dance postures), the human world of thought is constructed. This power interprets the pattern of subjective emotions. Various cultures, including politics, economy, religion, history, and even abstract philosophical ideas, are all reflected in the basic worldview hidden in dance posture symbols. Similarly, as a pattern of subjective emotions, dance postures interpret and express the hidden metaphors of culture through the construction of illusory power. Therefore, different types of culture determine the forms of illusory power in the stylization

of dance postures, and then they are supported and driven by the illusory power constructed by dance postures. For example, the Manchu yangge in the Fushun area of Liaoning was formed during the late Ming and early Qing dynasties over 400 years ago and is an ancient dance that has been passed down among the people. The “Fengtian Tongzhi” records that there was a folk dance called “treading hammers” in the Bohai State (Mohe). “Whenever officials and civilians gathered to celebrate each year, they ordered skillful singers and dancers to lead the way, followed by noble women, singing and dancing together, rotating gracefully, and it was called ‘treading hammers.’” As described in “Liu Bian Jilüe”: “Those who watch the performance all dance by changing partners between men and women, lifting their sleeves to their foreheads, and then flipping their sleeves to their backs, rotating gracefully.” (As shown in figure one: a Jurchen person (ancestor of the Manchu) dancing for the Liao Kingdom). Based on the analysis of the historical records, the ancestors of the Manchu (Mohe) depicted the dance postures of their ancestors through rotations. The Manchu dance (mangshi) during the Ming and Qing periods also described its dance postures as rotating. Therefore, it is speculated that the “rotating gracefully” is also a “rotating gesture.” From the development of “treading hammers” in the Sui and Tang dynasties to “mangshi” in the Ming and Qing dynasties and to “Manchu yangge” in modern China, the momentum of “rotation” still survives among the people. Especially in the process of the male and female “mangshi” of Manchu yangge, it is particularly common (as shown in figure two). The formation of this momentum mainly depends on the combination of “pan” and “crouch” postures. In Manchu yangge, “pan” may symbolize the dynamic representation of “rotating gracefully.” Usually, the rotation is done by male dancers circling around female dancers, achieving the effect of “feng pan bi dou.” The “crouch” in Manchu dance is different from everyday actions. This construction of illusory power not only specifies the performers to be male but also requires some of the high-difficulty techniques in Manchu yangge to be executed during the crouching process. As described by Manchu yangge performer Lu Rongnian: “The ancestors of the Manchu pursued the aesthetic taste of ‘women high and men low.’ The Manchu are a nation capable of both military and civilian affairs, and they view warriors as bartulus. During the Later Jin period (ancestors of the Manchu), if a family had male members, the state would reward them with 24 taels of silver to be used for future military conscription. Male children should begin practicing ‘diao bangzi’ (crouching exercise) at the age of eight to solidify the foundation for future military archery.” [9] From this analysis, whether “crouch” comes from the aesthetic taste of women high and men low, or from the martial arts training of capable warriors, or from the historical style remnants of “treading hammers” and “mangshi,” the Manchu people transformed historical, political, ideological, and aesthetic cultures into certain illusions, forming an inherited energy conveyed by the body, and developing in their unique style. Over time, the dance posture style accumulated through the combination of crouching and rotating movements has become a symbol of Manchu history, culture, and even identity, breaking the narrowness of tradition and unchangeability.



Figure 1: Fish-head banquet of the Liao Dynasty (taken from Harbin Jing Shang Jing History Museum).



Figure 2: Male and female duet in Manchu yangge (photo taken by folk artist Zhou Yu).

3.2. Vitalization Principle

Regarding the “Vitalization Principle,” it breaks away from the specific developmental context of history and ventures into the abstract symbols of life forms. It expresses the dancer’s own body through deconstruction and further interprets the originality and expressiveness of dance postures. Therefore, it is often referred to as the “Dance Art Creative Form.” In other words, each performer stages their dance postures in a non-real space, which is intangible and imaginative, surpassing the visual outline of one dance posture to another. [2] In this space, dance posture symbols are not bound by any formulaic constraints of history, culture, politics, or customs. They are free to create and transcend. These illusory forms are not only organic and independent but even separated from the real world. Regardless of any cultural influences, they undergo artistic transformations. However, compared to the stylization principle, its space still revolves around the connection between dance postures, its time remains rhythmic, its theme is still an illusion, and its movements and postures are still illusory and symbolic. Ultimately, its dance postures continue to express thoughts and emotions. As an example, the work “The Rite of Spring,” choreographed by Nijinsky (1889-1950), is a typical case. This work breaks the typical stylization principle of ballet, which emphasizes outward extension, tension, straightness, and uprightness. Set to the unconventional music of Stravinsky, the dancers perform Nijinsky’s envisioned primitive dance steps with their feet turned inward and legs turned inward, leaping freely. Occasionally, they raise their fists, stamp their feet, and bend their bodies sideways, dispersing the intense power throughout the joints of the dancers’ limbs. In constructing this work, Nijinsky breaks the “Slavic-style body” and “ballet aesthetic stylization,” using the driving force of life to create an experiential text. Similarly, seemingly Chinese martial arts, kung fu, and yoga’s illusory postures transcend the definition of stylization and history, becoming a force of life experience. Another example is “contact improvisation,” which is also one of the representatives of the “Vitalization Principle.” During the performance, dancers live in the present of a non-real space, penetrating inherent thoughts, emotions, ecology, and culture with their living bodies. The free and spontaneous postures of the body no longer conform to dance categories, as if the styles, expressions, and techniques of various dances are accommodated and used by the body, creating a visual outline of one dance posture after another.



Figure 3: “Four Dance Statuettes of Ritual Offerings” in the collection of China Huanghai Art Museum.



Figure 4: Excerpt from the dance drama “Confucius” - “Caiwei”.

4. Conclusion

Based on the previous discussion, when it comes to research systems, the “Stylization Principle” emphasizes that body postures should follow the footprints of history, ideology, ecology, and other cultures. On the other hand, the “Vitalization Principle” seeks to break away from historical, ideological, ecological, and cultural paths. Therefore, this also indicates that as an expression of illusory power, the body can choose either the path of the “Stylization Principle” or the road of the “Vitalization Principle.” However, in the reality of the “journey,” people often embark on the creative path of the “Vitalization Principle” but mistakenly label it as the “Stylization Principle.” As a result, the value and significance of “bodily tradition” become chaotic and lost under the impact of visual enjoyment. For example, Figure three is from the collection of “Four Dance Statuettes of Ritual Offerings” at the China Huanghai Art Museum. This dance posture is deeply influenced by Confucian ritual and music culture. The seated dance in front and the standing dance in the back with the right hand placed on top of the left hand represent the etiquette of women. With one hand draped over the sleeve and the other hand hanging by the side, this reflects the etiquette culture of the Han Dynasty. As the name suggests, the Han Dynasty abolished the various schools of thought and promoted Confucianism, seeking to integrate the cultures of the Yellow River and Yangtze River. Thus, the dance of female musicians in the Han Dynasty actually promoted the culture of Chu music and dance. Similarly, Fu Yi emphasized in “Ode to Dance”: “The dance of female musicians in the Han Dynasty is consistent with the Chu music and dance on the spiritual level. It adheres to the principle of performing ‘exquisite and dignified movements to show one’s ambition’.” From this, it can be seen that the dance postures of female musicians in the Han Dynasty pursued a sincere expression to reach a profound realm. In contrast, Figure four, a posture from the dance drama “Confucius” in the classic segment “Caiwei,” is named after the poem “Caiwei” in the Book of Songs. It is deeply influenced and led by the ritual and music culture of Confucius’ time. However, in terms of dance postures, the

twisting of the body and lying on the side, with the beautiful three consecutive bends of the head, chest, and hips, deviate from the inheritance of Confucian etiquette culture. Similarly, the Zhou Dynasty's belief in ritual and music emphasizes "starting from feelings and ending with etiquette and music," while Confucius advocated "enjoying music without indulgence." In this sense, the "Caiwei" dance segment actually represents the creation and development of the "Vitalization Principle" but is presented as adhering to the "Stylization Principle" of historical culture, resulting in confusion within the dance expression system.

In summary, dance postures are integral to the unity of body and mind. They differ from everyday postures and possess a certain non-real and illusory power. Since they embody the connection and dynamics of "ecology" and "psychology" within their form, the expression of the body cannot escape the transmission pathways of the "Stylization Principle" and the "Vitalization Principle." In essence, there is no right or wrong for "dance postures"; the criteria for evaluating them are determined by their illusory labels. This also illustrates that focusing on historical culture and reconstructing past realities should be guided by the "Stylization Principle," while innovation and the creation of contemporary folk dances and classical dances should be clarified through the "Vitalization Principle." By advancing vigorously under the mutual promotion, assistance, deepening, clarification, and development of both principles, we construct the illusory kingdom of dance expression.

References

- [1] Yuan, H. (2011). *Aesthetics of Chinese Dance*. People's Publishing House.
- [2] Lang, S. (1986). *Emotion and Form*. (D. J. Liu, Z. Q. Fu, & F. X. Zhou, Trans.). China Social Sciences Press.
- [3] Hegel. (1979). *Principles of Legal Philosophy*. Commercial Press. (Page 71).
- [4] Wen, Y. D. (1984). *On Dance*. In "Theory of Artistic Features" (pp. 316-317). Cultural and Art Publishing House.
- [5] Wu, X. B. (1982). *Introduction to New Dance Art*. China Drama Publishing House. (Page 1).
- [6] Liang, L. (1990). *Dance Dreams*. China Dance Publishing House. (Page 105).
- [7] Wang, K. F. (1994). *Dictionary of Chinese Dance*. Cultural and Art Publishing House. (Page 429).
- [8] Yu, P. (n.d.). *Morphology of Dance*. Internal teaching material of Beijing Dance Academy. (Page 4).
- [9] Shen, D. H. (2015). *Folk Tolerance: An Analysis of the Language Composition of Fushun Manchu Yangge*. Master's thesis, Beijing Dance Academy. (Page 42).