

CHINESE MINORITY DANCES:
PROCESSORS AND PRESERVATIONISTS
PART I

The text for both parts of this essay (Part I: 'Processors' and Part II: 'Preservationists') is taken entirely from Chapters 5, 6 and 7 of a recently completed Master's thesis (See Fairbank, 1985), entitled 'The Collection, Preservation and Dissemination of Minority Dance in the People's Republic of China'. Since 1954, a serious effort to accumulate, preserve and disseminate the dances of the numerous minority peoples of China has been made under the direction of the Chinese Ministry of Culture and the All-China Dance Association. Minority dances are recorded, re-created and taught throughout the country by professional dance artists and teachers. The Chinese program of collection is far more systematic and ambitious in scope than any such effort being made anywhere else in the world. Inevitably, this program faces problems which are of great professional interest to various fields of study, including dance research and social and cultural anthropology. The sometimes conflicting policies of 'preservation' and 'processing' of these dances is the focus of interest in both sections of this entire essay, mainly because they raise issues pertaining to authenticity (the main interest of the preservationists) and acceptability (the main interest of the processors). It is to be hoped that the presentation of these issues might stimulate discussion among JASHM's readership, not only regarding the methods of recording dance materials, but the theories that support data collection, translation, transcription and transposition with reference to any structured system of human actions, danced or non-danced.

Ethnic dances have been actively collected for both political and cultural purposes since the early phases of socialist government in China. In an effort to cooperate with indigenous minority groups, the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) has sent not only party cadres, but also cultural emissaries to the remote regions in order to collect data and exchange ideas. Sharing their food, learning their languages and participating in their cultural and religious activities is an integral part of the minorities campaign. Professional dancers, choreographers, and researchers, selected by the government, were called upon to participate in this national project during the 1950's and 1960's.¹ Although this cultural and political undertaking was abruptly halted during the ten years of the Cultural Revolution, it has been reinstated since 1976. Many of these professionals, now well into their forties and fifties, have resumed their field studies

and research, but are finding less cultural richness as the minority peoples, who often gave up their cultural traditions during the Cultural Revolution, are reviving their customs only gradually. As a group, these researchers spoke enthusiastically of their experience in the field, saying that, although often naive and unprepared for field research, they are profoundly affected and inspired by their contacts with indigenous peoples and the native performers of ethnic dances.²

As a result of the recent directives to restore national culture, the renewed political interest in minority groups, and the large-scale research project in dance being conducted at this time,³ the investigation and collection of ethnic dance material throughout China has become highly organized under the present government. There are two distinct groups of researchers involved. One group, 'the preservationists', is principally concerned with preservation and documentation, while the chief interest of the other group, 'the processors', is in the collection of materials for teaching and choreographic use. This essay will focus on various methods of collection and fieldwork utilized by both types of researchers. It will also examine some of the ways in which this field-data is altered through the process of collection, transmission and choreographic manipulation. It is then possible to trace this danced material from the field to its place in government-organized dance activity.⁴

All collection and standardization procedures are extremely influenced by jiagong (processing), meihua (beautification, and xheng-li (to arrange and put in order). These Chinese terms appeared in nearly every conversation I had with informants and were clearly passed down by the central government -- and meant to be passed on. As one researcher explained, this national effort to collect and disseminate minority and folk dances is not simply for archival purposes, "but to develop a new dance form in order to express and enrich modern life" (Fieldnotes, 1983). This ethnic material must not only appeal to a general audience, but must also be morally 'correct'⁵ and flattering to minority populations. Consequently, anything drawn from the field and introduced to classrooms or theaters must pass certain tests of morality, aesthetic appeal and political approval from a Han/communist point of view before it can be introduced to the masses.

Art in China is socialistic by design and highly propagandistic. In the case of minority and folk dances, it is necessary that government policy towards these peoples be expressed in optimistic terms and that a positive picture be painted of their lives and culture. The government's aim is twofold: one, to eradicate Han prejudice towards the minorities peoples, and two, to give the minorities a sense of equality and participation in national goals and the cultural future. Since the limits and guidelines of this national project are defined predominantly by the Han and overseen by the CCP, it is inevitable that certain aspects of this ethnographic material be considered unsuitable for mass consumption and general cultural

enrichment. Therefore, even if the methods of collection were highly sensitive and accurate, minority dances would not appear before the public in their original forms because of such institutionalized concepts and practices as jiagong and meihua. Furthermore, the aspects of the transformation process called xheng-li involve categorization and elimination. Those dances and elements of the idiom considered to be 'unhealthy', 'in bad taste', 'feudal' and/or 'uncharacteristic of the people'⁶ will not be included in the official collection project either as material for the stage or the archives.

Shapiro⁷ spent two years studying with the Hunan Dance Troupe in Changsha, Hunan, and commented that dancers and teachers were "...not considered worth their salt unless they had spent several months living among minority (or tribal Han) people to study their dances in context" (1981). Consequently, teachers and professional dancers eagerly apply for assignments in the field. From these assignments, often lasting for a period of several months, these researchers, or 'processors', bring back as much selected authentic material as possible, collected by such means as written field notes, memorized movement, and video documentation when this is possible.

These dance-gathering expeditions are organized by the local arts and minorities bureaux. A local guide is provided who is both capable of communicating in the native language and who is familiar with the area and local customs. Generally, only one minority group is focused upon at any one time and over a month's period many different tribes and villages are visited.⁸ When I asked if visiting so many different locations prohibited in-depth research and experience with the idiom, the usual response was that the general movement patterns and 'important' or 'representative'⁹ dances of a particular village could be mastered and transcribed for their purposes in just a few days.

One very experienced teacher from the Beijing Dance Academy spent two months studying with old masters in Xinjiang. Her sincerity and concern towards her work were unmistakable, but her research methods and field techniques were surprising: she explained that she often had to train her informants how to teach their dances to her so as to be consistent and precise. In fact, she added that it is sometimes necessary to have representatives from a minority group go to the local cultural bureaux set up in each province so as to learn the standardized teaching methods used in professional academies. What is disturbing about this practise is that once the ethnic movement has been categorized to suit the Han teaching format, it no longer exists on its own syntactically and grammatically correct foundations.¹⁰ It is very much like translating one language verbatim into another, without taking into account the grammatical structures of the two

different languages. For example:

Chinese = Ni hao ma?

Direct translation = You good now?

Interpreted translation = How are you doing?

Certainly a small amount of processing was necessary for this translation to sound like good grammatical and idiomatic American English, however, as most people who have studied a foreign language are aware, a great deal gets lost in the translation. Similarly, minority dance idioms are misinterpreted and misunderstood throughout the various stages of collection and translation.¹¹ The researchers invariably impose their own rules of order upon the informant's material. These methods of investigation and collection can close off possible insights into the minority group's traditional methods of cultural transmission.

This same teacher explained her methods of collecting and teaching her field data thus:

It was necessary to organize [the field data] first in order to write it down the best way. I did this by taking the special characteristics of certain artists and grouping all movements of a similar nature in a systematic order. When you first notate what you see you put everything down, even the ugly movements, but in teaching that dance you choose what material is most representative of the people and what is most useful for teaching in order to illustrate the local style clearly. Even in teaching you may change or 'process' [the material] in order to get the best appeal, although some teachers develop and add so much that it is no longer folk dance. You cannot just do anything. You must be careful to preserve the character of the people. Some 'processing' is necessary, however, in order that the dances be presentable on stage to the public. Besides, the minority people themselves are developing and this must be reflected in the dances that represent them (Fieldnotes, 1983).

Field data, though prized by educators and choreographers as rich source material is apparently altered both consciously and unconsciously at the outset of the research process. Although this teacher was particularly skilled at observing movement and distinguishing styles, and may have learned these dances from informants in the field, she was not trained methodologically to recognize what was or was not 'significant' to the informants themselves. As a result, her class material could only have been a stylization of the original dance; a kind of body language 'gloss' of the material. There was no way of distinguishing which aspects of the material had been maintained and which had been re-created. She was trained, however, to recognize what was politically correct and aesthetically appealing to the government in control.

That educators and choreographers are sent in such number to the sources of their material is remarkable. However, political interference and methodology can ultimately prove detrimental to the preservation of this cultural material. The procedures and techniques employed by the processors might appear to be adequate for the purposes of the Chinese government program. Certain aims of the government and interests of the dance community are being fulfilled insofar as there is a new wealth of 'indigenous' movement vocabulary to draw from and the Han population's general knowledge about these minorities has been increased.

To my way of thinking, however, both as a western observer and an anthropologically trained spectator, their attempts to categorize and schematize the field data frustrates the opportunity fully to understand the situation at hand. Minjian wudao, or ethnic dance, has been a popular art form appreciated by a large number of Chinese, but it is not entirely clear whether these audiences are conscious that these staged ethnic dances bear little resemblance to the original material. Two different idioms of dancing are being conflated into one -- to the disadvantage of both. The staged dances are not realistic portrayals of minority forms and yet they are identified as such with no further explanation to the Han observer. It is likely that the audience simply expects an evening of entertainment and aesthetic satisfaction and few are concerned with the ethnographic issues at hand.

What do the minority people themselves think about the dances that are meant to represent them and their movement idioms? I was told that they often "welcome the improvement upon their own style" (Fieldnotes, 1983) and that they apparently appreciate the 'beautification' procedures. Because the minorities themselves have direct input into the process at the initial stages it is believed that all is being done to bring the real minority cultures to the general population. When I asked why the minorities themselves could not perform their own dances before the general public, I was told that the movement material was simply not suitable for mass consumption without some 'processing and beautification'. The minorities do in theory have a right to reject the re-created dances, I was told, but in practise this is seldom if ever done. There is pressure on them to accept the revised versions and there is rarely an opportunity for them to view the staged material in any case.

In the contemporary dance education system in China, there are three types of dance studied: classical ballet, classical Chinese dance, and ethnic/folk (minjian wudao). The term minjian wudao refers to minority forms (dances of the Mongol, Korean, Uighur, Dai and Xinjiang peoples),¹² as well as to Han folk dances. Most dancers are expected to have mastered the fundamentals of all of these diverse idioms in order to be prepared for professional careers.¹³ This system of dance training was developed by Dai Ai-lian and others at the Beijing

Dance Academy (Beijing Wudao Xueyuan).¹⁴ Dance academies throughout the country are generally modelled after the one in Beijing and require that a certain number of teachers be experienced in various minority dance styles, particularly in those styles which are considered to be from culturally rich and colorful areas. Teachers trained at the Beijing Dance Academy are generally considered to be the most skilled, with the greatest amount of exposure and proficiency in this area. As a result, they are usually sought after by provincial dance troupes and academies in order to upgrade the standards and improve the reputation of the institution.

The educational system is centrally controlled and it is felt that dance materials must be standardized in order that an approved repertory be disseminated and training methods be systematized throughout China. Many of my informants commented on the fact that Chinese ethnic idioms and classical dance forms of the Han were originally not standardized and that there was no systematic method of training the body or teaching techniques.¹⁵ In the 1950's, the ballet barre was adopted by dance academies throughout the country as the single most reliable method of obtaining a 'beautiful body' and overall technical expertise.¹⁶ As a result, all of the dancing taught at professional institutions has a distinctly balletic 'flavor'; that is, the geometrized, symmetrical, postural characteristics of this idiom of body language tend to dominate, so that to movement experts, the native idiom is 'spoken' or 'uttered', as it were, with a strong balletic 'accent'.

Furthermore, the minority dance materials collected by the processors are standardized prior to being entered into the school curriculum, while the transcription of this field data takes place usually after it has been recreated for classroom and stage use. A number of professionals with whom I spoke were aware of the dangers of distortion and stylization that ballet training can introduce into the ethnic and folk materials, but all were insistent, however, that some systematized training method was needed. Furthermore, all agreed that the results of ballet training are now expected by Chinese audiences. Apparently, in the effort to create a unified national culture, the ballet line and demeanor has become the prescribed appearance for all professional dancers, regardless of what danced idiom is being represented. (For a full discussion of this "line", "demeanor" and its history, see Durr, 1985.)

There are many dance publications printed in China,¹⁷ many of which are meant for dance educators to use as source materials for their classrooms. Because the methods of systematization and notation are insufficient and the material often tampered with during the processing, these manuals are by no means accurate documentations of the original data collected in the field. In fact, the data gathered by the processors is often not intended as a scientific resource, but rather as a creative one. Dance educators admitted that the "how-to" pamphlets

with detailed descriptions were incomprehensible to them if they had not somehow witnessed the dances themselves.¹⁸ Disseminating the field data in this way was one more indication of how distortion and inaccuracy in the re-creation process occurs.

A book is being published at this time by the Beijing Dance Academy which details preferred methods for collecting, organizing and teaching 'raw' field data. Another is being written for professional choreographers and dance directors on how to develop these resources into useful, government-approved performances. What is being published, performed and taught throughout the country in such staggering quantities is generally processed and bears little resemblance to the originals. Certainly in this way a government goal is being achieved; all professional dancers and a large portion of the Chinese population are now familiar with a common movement image and vocabulary -- one that embodies politically correct views that is comprised of ballet techniques, Chinese classical dance, and processed minjian wudao.

From 1954 until 1960, and again since 1976, provincial dance troupes and academies have been specifically directed to collect and compile the dances of their own regions and local minorities. In this way each province would theoretically be responsible for teaching and performing appropriate materials.¹⁹ For example, the Hunan Song and Dance Troupe and Academy is responsible for the dances of the local minorities in the province of Hunan, which includes the Miao, Yao, Tu Jia, Dong, Zhuang and Weiwuer peoples. There are also many local Han tribes each with its own movement forms and variations which must be accounted for in their repertory. Supposedly, the teachers, students and company members are in the process of becoming versed in all the 'representative dances' of these diverse peoples, but in fact this is proving to be an impractical goal. There are not enough semester days in their courses of study for the students to be able to learn this much material. Furthermore, the Hunanese audiences prefer to see their provincial company perform repertory that is popular elsewhere, and not simply the local fare. On a national scale, some provincial troupes are less equipped to handle this material and some provinces have larger and more varied minority populations than others.

An informant in Hunan told me that the teachers were overworked and not sufficiently trained to analyze and coordinate this large quantity of unfamiliar material, resulting in some confused amalgamations and misrepresentations, such as a particular Tu Jia dance that was being taught by a teacher who had combined several different Tu Jia dances into one in order to shrink the amount of material he was required to cover in that semester. This would seem to be a serious problem when the stated purpose of the project is to preserve and disseminate this cultural heritage. The teacher had, in fact, spent time studying with the Tu Jia people but was apparently not skilled or experienced enough to bring his material from the field to the classroom. Furthermore, he was ill-equipped theoretically and methodologically to be able to differentiate between variations of the Tu Jia movement idiom.

Very little time is spent on these research expeditions investigating the minority cultures, and certainly none of these researchers has the time to learn the local dialects of spoken languages. Thus, although the educators speak with great respect about these field experiences and the data collected, they are theoretically and methodologically incapable of doing the job. The 'job' itself appears to be overly ambitious and unrealistic. The teachers are aware of the danger of misrepresentation and certain professionals are considered more capable of maintaining the 'flavor' of the original material in their classrooms. However, most teachers I spoke with did not seem aware of the potential for inaccuracy built into the methods of transmission they use. For example, very often the sole link between the field data and classroom lessons is the ability these teachers have to memorize and recall movement nuances which, in most cases, are totally foreign to them.

One of the questions that this theory and its accompanying methods of collection raises is this: Is it possible for the neuro-muscular system or the subconscious to be unbiased when one is learning unfamiliar movement material? Certainly, many of the teachers I met in China were remarkably skilled at recalling and reproducing a wide variety of ethnic styles and idioms, but how 'multi-lingual' can any one person be in such a variety of idioms to which he or she is not accustomed in the first place? Since very little overall time is spent studying any one dance form, this alleged 'versatility' must be due in large part to skillful surface imitation. The problems arise when these teachers and choreographers take liberties with the material with which they are fundamentally unfamiliar. Skilled actors often imitate accents and colloquialisms, but the charade stops there -- rarely are attempts made to expand on the native phrases or terminologies. Perhaps non-vocalised movement languages²⁰ should be accorded similar respect?

Another problem inherent within the Chinese method of transmission is the implicit theory that field data can survive intact when it is taught and re-taught many times and subjected to so many transferrals. At the Beijing Dance Academy (and elsewhere) experienced teachers with extensive field experience are called upon to teach "refresher courses"²¹ to the other teachers in order that they not forget the dances once learned in the field. Many teachers are required to teach their students idioms of dance that they may have witnessed only once and then only briefly. However, occasional arguments arise amongst the teachers as to accent, emphasis, and phraseology as each teacher remembers his or her field experiences slightly differently. No texts of notation are consulted in these instances, and this is due to the fact that nuances of this kind are simply not recorded. Furthermore, villages belonging to the same tribal peoples may emphasize different aspects of the idiom or may have been influenced by separate sources. Because of these sorts of field inconsistencies it is methodologically necessary to coordinate all information collected

in a reliable notated form and to investigate each field experience separately. Although some techniques and a common nomenclature are being developed, the present system is highly arbitrary and theoretically unreliable as far as reported field data is concerned.

While conducting interviews in China, it became apparent that my notions of theory, authenticity and general concerns about cultural preservation were quite different from those of my informants. One suspects that the minority peoples have a different view of these issues as well. To a native speaker, there is nothing particularly harmful about adopting foreign expressions, for example, and perhaps for a Mongolian, a little ballet thrown into the local dance may seem inoffensive and even pleasing. The situation changes when local dances are systematically, although perhaps unconsciously, eradicated and forgotten due to poor foresight and inadequate theories and methods of preservation and transmission. In general, the processors with whom I spoke often found my concerns irrelevant because they saw no danger in their methods and because they did not share my cultural interests -- nor did their views include the general western academic practice of searching for negative evidence. They appeared primarily concerned with capturing the 'authentic flavor' of these idioms of dancing and in accurately rendering what they conceive to be the "essential characteristics"²² of these peoples' dances.

Although much attention was being paid to the details of the hand gesture and body posture, both meaning-filled aspects of the Chinese classical danced idioms, other details and characteristics were being ignored; down-played as "less important" and even deliberately eliminated. There was no common approach or sound theoretical basis for the research being conducted -- only a 'shared goal' -- and although these researchers all claimed that they believed in maintaining authenticity, different teachers put varying degrees of stress on the matter. Good will and expert dancing skills alone are not enough to tackle this complex and subtle ethnographic material. Some researchers, particularly the preservationists, were acutely aware of this issue and were concerned that the answers to the problems might lie beyond their grasp.²³

The primary concern of the processors is to mold these ethnic dance forms into suitable material for 'the masses', and it is not in the interests of this goal to analyze the meaning content or cultural context of these dances.²⁴ The processor's mission is to disseminate "processed" material that has been based upon the original in the interests of cultural exchange. Eventually, cultural homogeneity may ensue. What one witnesses in the classrooms in Beijing is far removed from the actions and meanings of the dances that occur in the field, and what appears on stage for mass consumption -- what is euphemistically called 'ethnic dance' -- has been re-choreographed oftentimes with a balletic basis. This resembles the original only remotely. One can

only assume that accuracy or representation is not the central issue here. Undoubtedly the Han policies and attitudes towards minority peoples, along with their attitude towards danced movement, have significant influence on the results of this vast cultural project.

Regardless of jiagong and meihua and other aspects of processing that take place away from the field, it was clear to me that a great deal of change was taking place within the initial stages of collecting. Each researcher has devised his or her own way of jotting down movement and has developed ways of memorizing the phrasing and nuance of each dance. The culture itself is more or less left unexplored and the processors have little comprehension and virtually no interest in the significances of the data within a particular cultural minority. Surface explanations are made up amongst themselves or given to them by their informants. The result is that data are codified and analyzed outside of their contexts according to the interests of the researchers and the demands of the national project. I am quite certain that these professionals feel no malice or disrespect towards the ethnic material or towards their informants, but they are overwhelmed by their job assignments, they are theoretically and methodologically ill-equipped and ultimately misled into believing that their efforts are necessary and sufficient to complete the task at hand.

In the following section (Part II) of this essay, I will discuss the various methods used to collect ethnic dances in China and the attempts that are made to respond to the national cultural campaign. It is the preservationists in particular who have developed methods of research, field techniques, theory and organizational structures believed necessary to get the job done.

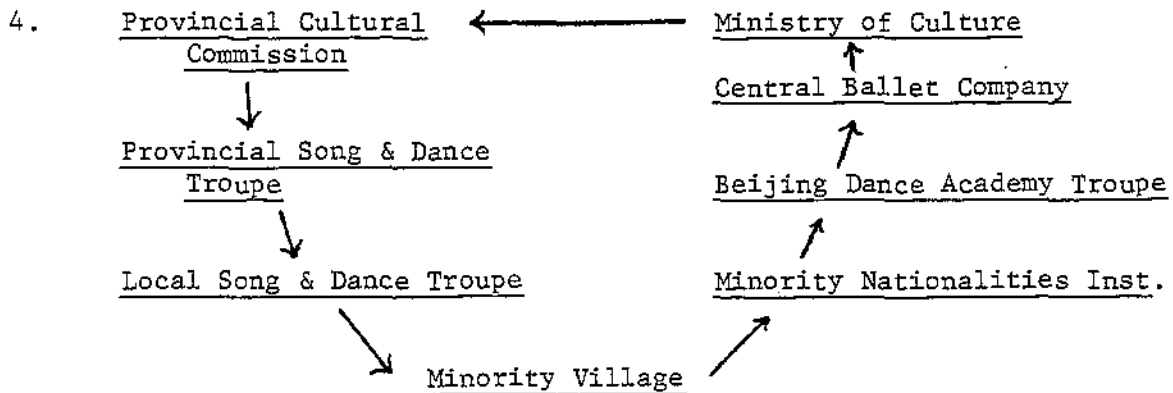
Holly Fairbank

NOTES

1. Documented research materials on minority and Han folk dances collected after the establishment of the PRC (People's Republic of China) were destroyed during the cultural revolution, I was told. However, many of the same researchers have returned to the revived project and are able to recall where many of the rare dances and traditional activities can be found.
2. The researchers I spoke with, particularly the educators and processors, often projected great enthusiasm and seriousness about their work. On the whole, these people were, or had been performers, and were quite spirited and animated in general. This concern and appreciation they expressed towards this

material was clearly not enough to compensate for the fact that they were theoretically and methodologically ill-equipped to analyze these dances other than to memorize them. This is not to imply that these professionals were incompetent or untrustworthy, but that they were simply not trained intellectually to perceive certain aspects of movement materials, consequently, their descriptions, explanations and analyses of these dances was frequently questionable or unreliable. See Appendix II for illustration and description of a specific example of personal notation.

3. This research project, initiated in 1981, proposes to document much of China's ethnic and folk dance materials by the year 1990. The project is being sponsored by the Ministry of Culture and organized by the Arts Research Institute (Yishu Yanjiusu).



This is a diagrammatic illustration of one possible route that a minority dance might travel through the bureaucratic structure that ultimately is responsible for its transformation from original (Minority Village) to its various 'processed transformations' and permutations. A representative from a minority group studying at the Nationalities Institute introduces a village dance to the student troupe there. Processed and performed for the public, it receives the attention of the Dance Academy (situated next door in Beijing) where the same dance is re-adjusted for a different performance event. The Central Ballet Company then acquires the 'beautified' folk dance, and more ballet movements are added. From here, the ministry of Culture adopts this dance in its new form as a perfect example of this minority people's character. The dance becomes a model for all arts associations throughout the country and this (processed) piece is recorded, illustrated and reprinted in local dance publications. Provincial song and dance troupes re-stage this dance for local audiences. Local song and dance troupes in village districts also perform their version of this particular dance. By this stage in the dance's 'development',

the original minority group may see it performed by professional dancers. One informant told me that these village groups often admire the 'improvements' on their traditional dances or rituals and, she said, they accept the changes for their own use, finding the new movements more beautiful and 'modern' than their own.

5. The questions being raised at this time concerning China's culture turn around this: "What is the history of Chinese art and what should the national style of contemporary China be?" (Fieldnotes, 1983). It is believed that China's rich cultural legacy should not be overlooked, while at the same time new models and forms must be developed in order to represent the multi-ethnic society and political ideology of modern China. Since the devastating effects of the cultural revolution and subsequent reforms, pressure has been placed on the artistic community to create contemporary forms and fill the 'gap' of culture. In recent years, controversy has arisen over whether this contemporary dance style should illustrate the "spirit of the 1980's" (Fieldnotes, 1983) or whether it should continue in its present course and focus on the indigenous movement traditions found throughout China. As of 1983 a popular formula was to create historical dance dramas inspired by ancient texts and images found on artifacts from the past.
6. Elements which are labelled "unhealthy" include those movements and stylistic aspects which the government considers lewd, provocative or "politically backwards". For instance, a shaman's ecstatic movements during a trance would likely be considered "unhealthy" because of their seemingly unrestrained quality and their associations with spiritual concepts -- notions that are contradictory to the PRC's viewpoint. Dances or movements might be passed over by a processor's research team if they seem "uncharacteristic" of a group because the aim of their efforts is systematically to compile what is typical and characteristic. In charting and categorizing this material for mass consumption, aberrant information falls by the wayside. However, the preservationists take note of all they observe even though the published documents of their research will contain only approved "healthy" material.
7. Special thanks go to Judith Shapiro who accompanied me on the trip to China (September, 1983 - November, 1983) and who both translated for me and guided me through a remarkably unique experience. Shapiro, herself, had spent several years in China prior to this trip, teaching English at a university in Hunan and studying at the Provincial Song & Dance Troupe there. She and her husband, Liang Heng, have given me ideas, inspiration, support and friendship throughout the duration of my research.

8. Visits such as the ones alluded to here are generally scheduled to coincide with local festivals and rituals whenever possible, although the processors generally go on field trips during their vacations -- usually during the annual Spring Festival in February. Preservationists are more likely to be able to witness ritual dance within its original context while the processors generally do not.
9. Again, the movements or dances considered "important" or "representative" almost completely relate to the parameters of the government directives and the immediate goals of the processors. In teaching Xinjiang dance styles, for example, the teacher must work within the restraints of the semester schedule and as a result is compelled to limit class materials to those elements he or she feels are most representative of that group of people. It is important to the government from an instructional point of view (as well as to the Chinese audience) that each minority group be represented by a recognizable dance style which can easily be identified. Many of these dance idioms are reduced to the lowest common denominator in order to create a simple equation of minority group to dance style.
10. A fundamental axiom of Williams's theory of semasiology is that human movement is analogous to human language in important ways and maintains many of the same theoretical and non-material properties. In any human movement idiom, danced or otherwise, there are grammatically correct formulas which generate meaning within the community of common movers. For further discussion of this, see Myers, 1981.
11. The researchers believe that it is very important physically to experience the movements themselves in order to store the information in their "physical memories". Categorizing movement types is also a popular means of recalling field experiences. Professional teachers and choreographers, particularly at the Beijing Academy, are extremely adept at spontaneously demonstrating numerous different dance styles. What seems less evident is their ability to conceptualize possible variations within an idiom, as one might in an improvisation of the foxtrot, for instance (See Myers, 1981). They did not appear to be aware of the structural framework within each idiom which this kind of conceptualization would require. From my observations, I conclude that the methods of teaching dancing rely heavily on imitation rather than on conceptual cognition, which may help to explain this tendency.
12. The dances of these peoples are considered particularly brilliant and rhythmically exciting. They have been favored (along with some others) by the dance community and the general public. Most

of the staged minjian wudao is gay and lighthearted, representing the minorities in a positive way. Consequently, those dances which lend themselves to this treatment are most likely to be used.

13. The standard choreography at this time generally involves the use of some Chinese classical or folk idiom. Although ballet training is evident in all professional dancers, the actual ballet vocabulary is often buried within the choreography and is not as evident unless it is used specifically for ballet choreography. Emphasis is placed upon the indigenous Chinese dance styles in most cases, however, after ten years of a strict ballet diet during the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese audiences often prefer ballet and appreciate balletically trained bodies.
14. The Beijing Dance Academy was founded in 1954 by Dai Ai-lien and was the first Institute of Dance in China of its kind. The Academy consists of a middle school, college and a performing dance troupe. Students are chosen from among graduates of the provincial dance schools and from among gifted students of local and amateur dance troupes throughout the country. Once a student has completed middle school, it must be decided whether he will continue his studies as performer, teacher or choreographer. At the present time the school is expanding and moving to a new location, and a graduate program is being implemented.
15. The Han people of China prior to 1945 had very little organized dance culture. The movements of the classical Chinese dance, for example, were passed down through generations by direct imitation. Various styles and interpretations were developed over the years in different opera houses and by different teaching masters.
16. Currently there is a debate in the Chinese dance community as to whether or not the ballet foundation is indeed necessary for all professional dance training. The Chinese classical dance is taught at the barre and the class is made up of a mixture of ballet and Chinese classical movements and sequences. One professional dancer told me privately that she was compelled to give herself a class after the company class in order to reorganize her muscles and separate out the conflicting messages from the mixing of two separate movement idioms. This situation is most likely to occur in the provincial academies and troupes because the level of teaching is not as high as is found on the central level. On the whole, however, most teachers I spoke with believed that ballet should be integrated into all professional dance classes as a matter of course in order to "increase flexibility and extend the line of the body" (Fieldnotes, 1983).

17. The number of publications on dance is quite large, with each province responsible for producing at least one a month. Half of the publications and newsletters include pictographs and descriptions of individual dances for use by dance teachers. A number of different sources told me, however, that it was virtually impossible to re-create a dance by this means and that these manuals are used more as a way of refreshing the memory or as a general introduction to the dance or idiom described. The dances represented in these publications are always processed first and the illustrated dancer is clearly ballet-trained (See Appendix I: Chinese Illustrated Notation and Description).
18. See Appendix I for example of the pamphlets alluded to.
19. In Hunan, booklets representing each district have already been published, documenting the dances collected by the provincial research team. These booklets will serve as models when this project is expanded nationally.
20. For further discussion of human body languages and semasiology, see Williams (1982 and 1985).
21. A teacher's refresher class was held three times a week at the Beijing Academy during the time of my stay there. Teachers would rotate on a monthly basis in order to distribute the teaching load and tap the resources of all the teachers' field experience. Over the course of a school year, various standard regional styles and ethnic dance forms were scheduled to be taught. This material was spread over a four-year period and different grade levels would study different styles or aspects of one cultural form. As an example, one teacher taught "Fundamentals of Korean Dance" to the sixth grade boys. When a particular minority form is being concentrated upon throughout the school, the teachers' refresher class will also focus on this material. Consequently, the teachers themselves are learning and re-learning the movements simultaneously with the students. Though skills of perception and ability to imitate movement were remarkable in most cases, the substance of the field research was gradually eroded as each teacher interpreted his lessons from the refresher course slightly differently. Furthermore, after a month of scheduled Korean dance, there would be, say, a month of Mongolian dance. These same teachers and students were expected to slip gracefully into a totally different and unrelated movement idiom. Finally, ballet class is a requirement of nearly all students at all levels of their training, further compounding the problem of ethnic purity and cultural perpetuation.
22. What I understood my informants to mean when they said they wanted to capture the "essential flavor" and "essential characteristics" of the minjian wudao is that they wanted to

memorize and transmit those qualities that seemed most to reflect the mannerisms and character of that people. One only wonders to what extent these researchers are able to judge what is "most essential" or "characteristic", particularly in such cases where they have little or no knowledge of their informants' culture and lifestyle.

23. A few of my informants expressed concern over the government's directive to process these ethnic and folk forms. These researchers did not want to compromise the ethnographic materials in any way, however, being law-abiding and responsible members of their communities, they were compelled to carry out the wishes of the government. On the whole, most processors and a number of preservationists whom I spoke with were of the opinion that minjian wudao was a part of the national culture and therefore must be organized to span ethnic boundaries.
24. The processors to whom I spoke usually provided me with simplistic explanations for why the dances of the minorities look the way they do. For example, one teacher described how Miao women's hip movements in a ritual dance could be explained by the fact that they carry heavy jars on their heads while climbing the hills surrounding their village. Another teacher explained that a hill tribe in Tibet uses a particular rhythm for dancing "because of the high altitudes of the village locations". A Dai people's Peacock dance was said to exist because legend had it that it was lucky to see a peacock. See Williams (1984) for further, in-depth discussion of the unsophisticated, "just-so" kind of theorizing that has, unfortunately, misled dance scholars for centuries, and see also Keali'inohomoku (1983) for further discussion of "primitive" dance.

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APPENDIX I

CHINESE ILLUSTRATED NOTATION AND DESCRIPTION

The following illustrations and descriptions are examples of commonly used styles of dance and movement notation. All of the figures are from teacher's manuals printed and distributed around China.

Figure A: Uses written description and realistic illustration of a human figure with action-direction indicators supplied. The numbers beneath each illustration refer to the part of the text with which it is associated. These numbers also correspond to the beats within the accompanying music. The title is underlined at the top of the page with words in parenthesis which say "open" and "lively" to indicate to the teacher what kind of "spirit" the dance should be given.

对 扇(三十二拍)

准备姿态：“正步”，双手叉腰。

第1—2拍：右脚朝3方向横跨一步，左脚经右脚前向右迈一步，屈膝。两臂平抬至“山膀”位，经外弧线在胸前交叉，左手在上，手心向外，身朝2方向并向前倾。眼看右手（如图26）。

第3—4拍：右臂平抬至“齐眉遮扇”位，左臂走下弧线至“提襟”位，身向右前方倾。最后半拍时，右脚向后擦地抬起90°，面朝3方向。

第5—12拍：“圆场步”顺时针方向跑一圈。

第13拍：左腿朝5方向后撤一步为轴，右腿挺直，脚尖由左向后划半弧至5方向前伸直，向左转半圈。双手在头上做“小五花”动作的一半，又迅速回复原状。身朝4方向，后仰，眼看双手（如图27）。



图 26



图 27

第14拍：右脚经右向后划弧线至2方向，左膝弯曲，左脚掌向右旋转。右臂随身体向右转拉至“山膀”位，左臂向前平抬。身朝1方向，眼看右手。

Figure B: Illustrates the model used for indicating the position of dancers in the performance space. The white part of the geometric symbols for the dancers pertains to the front of the body; the black is the back of the body. The different shapes can be used to indicate different groups such as male and female.

⊙ ⊕。记录大型舞剧时，也可在人物符号中添上字来区别各种人物，如 Ⓜ Ⓜ 等。人物符号中空白处代表人物的面向，黑色处代表人物的背向。

在记录“场记”时，首先要注明什么形状的符号代表什么人物（如例二二）。

例二二：

人物： ▽ = 李把子
 ⊙ = 兰花
 ⊕ = 鼓架子

在使用人物符号时，人物的面向要画得准确。例如“图一九”“图二〇”“图二一”这三个场记图的队形都是一个

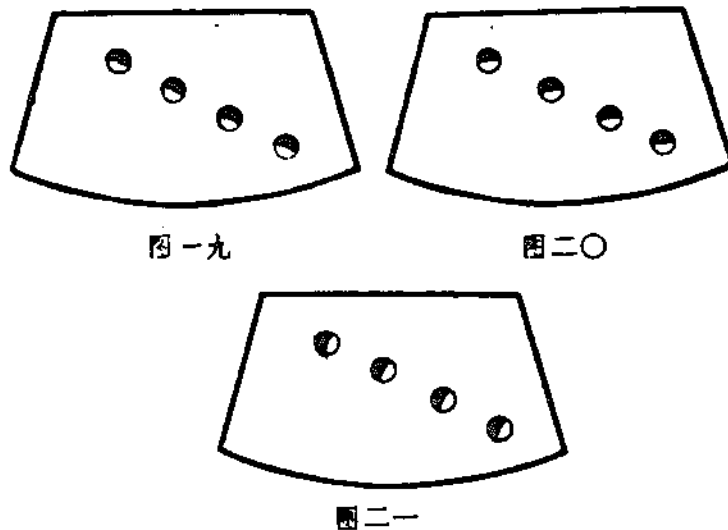


Figure C: In this Illustration basic movement vocabulary is shown, with the name of the action written beneath and action-direction indicators supplied. Note the smiling faces and balletic figure models. These particular movements are an example of the kinds of combined actions of ballet and Chinese classical dance which is standard material taught at every professional dance academy. (See Overleaf).



踢腿



踢十字腿



踢腿



踢腿



踢前腿

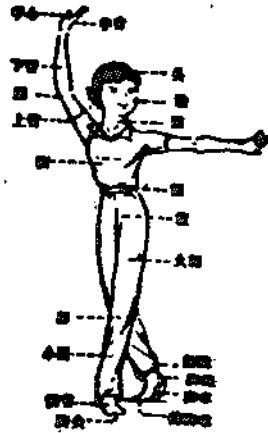
Figure D: This excerpt from a dance manual illustrates the taxonomies of the dancer's body and the names given to the space around the dancer's body. Such guides are intended to serve as reference when reading the textual descriptions of the dance being taught. Although this proves to be a useful method of conveying standardized information, the method itself imposes categories and taxonomies upon material which more than likely divides the human body and the space surrounding it in a decidedly different fashion from the concepts connected with the original ethnic material. (See Overleaf).

二、“基本动作”的文字说明

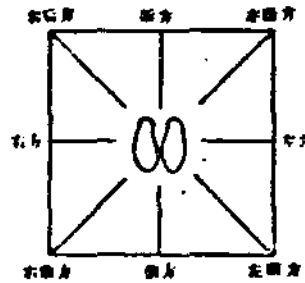
记录“基本动作”的动作过程，文字要精炼、准确。

(一)、在记录具体动作时，对“人体各部位名称”（如图一）“人体方位”（如图二）“髋腿的角度”（如图三）“手的方位”（如图四、五）等使用的名称，尽量要求大致统一。

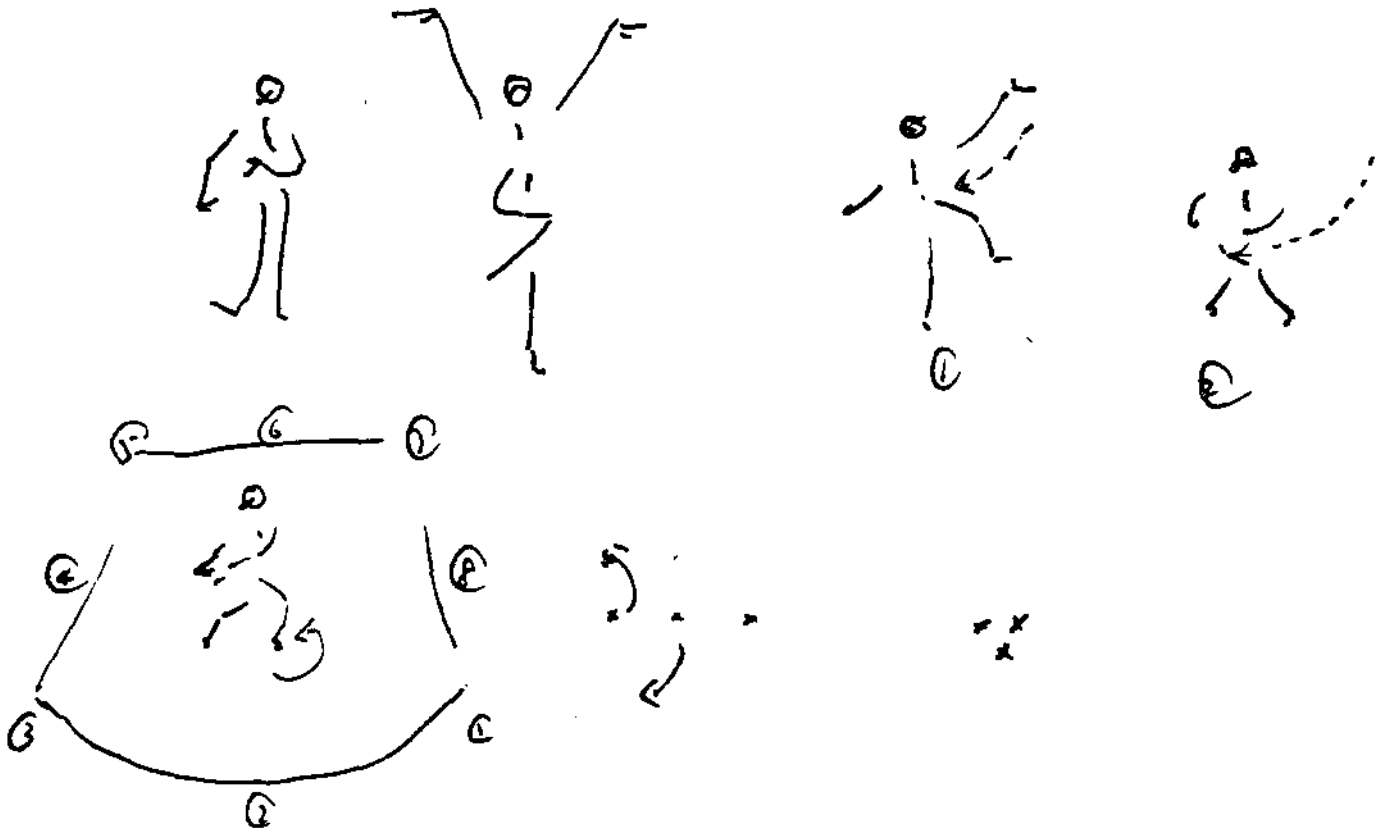
(二)、在记录动作时，凡有跳、转动作的，均以“大跳”、“中跳”、“小跳”来表明跳跃的幅度；以“一圈”、“半圈”、“四分之三圈”、“四分之一圈”来表明转圈的角度。



图一



图二

APPENDIX II - PERSONAL NOTATION

The above is an example of one teacher's personal notation method for recording dances. Along with extensive notes of description as well as photographs of the events, this processor says she is able to recreate the dances seen in the field when she returns home. The first two illustrations on the first line are characteristic movements of an idiom which she wanted to remind herself of in particular. The following two are examples of how she sketches movements of body parts. On the second line she illustrates how she indicates spatial directions by placing the figure inside an imaginary proscenium stage space and numbering the corners and sides as was taught her in ballet class. The last two images show formation movement of several dancers.