

A Survey Of Costume Apparatus And Character Exploration Of Lion Dance In Bangkok

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Abstract:

This paper employs an ethnographic fieldwork approach to conduct descriptive textual work on the costume apparatus of the Bangkok lion dance. Taking the theory of visual culture research in performing arts studies as the basic interpretive framework, it investigates and collects the visual culture, images, symbols and visual expressions of the costume apparatus of the Bangkok Lion Dance, and analyses the social identity and role expression of the costume apparatus of the Bangkok Lion Dance, so as to gain a deeper understanding of the various types of elements in the Lion Dance performances and their unique characteristics of artistic expression.

Keywords: Bangkok Lion Dance; Costume and Apparel; Investigation and Discussion

Introduction

According to academic research on lion dance and the definition of lion dance by the International Dragon and Lion Dance Association (ILDDA), "lion dance" refers to a traditional performing art form that originated in Chinese culture and has important cultural and symbolic significance. It is a stylised ceremonial dance characterised by elaborate costumes and synchronised movements to portray the lion. The Bangkok Lion Dance is one of the subordinate branches of the International Lion Dance and possesses a strong Thai cultural expression, which incorporates unique elements and characteristics that set it apart from other regional variations of lion dance. The costume apparatus of the Bangkok Lion Dance is usually accompanied by traditional Thai styles including scripts, beliefs, logos, customs, etc., reflecting Bangkok's multicultural heritage and vibrant artistic landscape. It highlights the continuous cultural exchange and adaptation of the lion dance art form in different regional contexts, while maintaining its performative essence as a symbol of good luck, blessings, and spirituality.

Objectives

The uniqueness of the Bangkok Lion Dance costume and apparatus has been shown to carry the historical heritage of Thailand. In its development, it also serves as a cultural microcosm of the Thai performance industry's outward transmission of native Thai social identity and Thai role expression. The purpose of this paper's study is twofold: First: to provide a comprehensive description of the costume apparatus of the Bangkok lion dance in Thailand. Secondly, to explore the role expressions conveyed by the costumes and instruments of the Bangkok Lion Dance.

Research Methodology

The research methodology used in this paper is mainly fieldwork, which refers to all research work involving field participation, also known as "field research", which is recognised as the basic methodology of the discipline of anthropology, and is also the earliest anthropological methodology.

1.1 Research Instrument

Based on the review and collation of historical literature, field research, interviews with Thai cultural anthropologists and theoretical guidance to determine the theoretical basis, interviews with Bangkok lion dance experts, lion dance instructors,

lion dance athletes and other groups to collect data. Investigating the costumes and apparatus of Bangkok lion dance and Chiu Chow lion dance, using the visual culture research theory in performing arts, the collected information and fieldwork data were collated, described and analysed, and the key information was screened out and integrated to form a comprehensive text on the costumes and apparatus of the Bangkok lion dance, in order to conduct a further exhaustive, truthful, and effective analysis of the role expression of the costumes and apparatus of the Bangkok lion dance.

1.2 Population and Sample

Target Population 1: 8 experts in the field of Thai lion dance performance, mainly interview data and theoretical guidance.
Target Population 2: About 100 people in Bangkok, Thailand, who are engaged in lion dance performance groups, mainly for observation and field contact.

1.3 Data collection

The data in this paper mainly comes from the data of the literature review (described above), expert interview data and observation data of the Bangkok lion dance group in the field survey. After collecting the above data, the information is compared and classified, and the theories and methods of performance anthropology, visual culture and semiotics are applied to carry out a cross-study, in-depth analysis, and qualitatively describe the culture of the lion dance from the concrete to the abstract.

1.4 Data Analysis

The data analysis of this study is qualitative. The qualitative description is based on the literature collected in the survey, expert text transcripts from the interviews, images, audio, video, observation notes and other data from the fieldwork. The textual or image data were systematically categorised, themes, patterns and meanings in the data were identified in order to extract important information and themes from them, and theory-driven explanations were used to gain a deeper understanding of the data and to make comparisons and interpretations.

Costumes and implements of the Bangkok lion dance

This paper takes as its basic categorisation framework the theory of visual culture studies in performing arts, an interdisciplinary field of study that involves the study of visual culture, images, symbols and visual representations. In the field of performing arts, visual culture studies theory is applied to the analysis and understanding of visual elements in performance, such as costumes and props, and their role in conveying meaning and cultural symbols.

Visual culture studies theory categorises performance-based costume apparatus into three tiers, namely:

Core performance costume: this refers to the main costume that plays an important role in a performance. Core performance costumes are usually associated with character identity, plot development or theme. They are the most visually prominent and compelling costumes in a performance, conveying the character's identity, traits and story context through cosmetic features. They mainly include fitted costumes, lion heads, lion quilts and big-headed Buddha masks.

Identifying Apparatus: These are the apparatus used to identify a particular character or identity in a performance. They can be specific props or accessories that convey specific symbols and symbolic meanings by associating them with specific characters or story elements. Identifiers play a role in clarifying character identity and character relationships in a performance. The main ones are the mobile drum set and the lion flag.

Functional Devices: These devices have a practical function or perform a specific task in a performance. They may not be the main focus of the performance, but they play an important role in supporting the characters. Functional instruments help to enhance the realism and continuity of the performance. They include Lion Dance Stakes (Dokko Pole and Plum Blossom Stake), "Qing", Couplets, Flower Balls, Flags, Fireworks, Ceremonial Supplies, etc.

This categorisation helps us to understand the different levels of costumes and props in a lion dance performance and their different roles in the performance process. Such a categorisation is based on the analysis of the functions and symbolic meanings of visual elements in performances, which helps to gain a deeper understanding of the visual expressions and cultural connotations of the performing arts.

RESULTS

2.1.1 Bangkok Lion Dance Fitting Costume: he Bangkok Lion Dance costume, as a sportswear specially designed for performance, is made of fabrics and styles carefully designed to suit the needs of sports and performance. The lion dance costumes are made from a variety of fabrics, including simulated silk, cotton plus silk, golden velvet and linen yarn, to

ensure that the costumes are comfortable and adaptable. Its design focuses on the flexibility of movement and the presentation of performance effects.

The shape of the lion dance fitted costume usually consists of a combination of a sports round neck T-shirt, a waist rope, closed sports trousers and sports shoes. The T-shirt is designed based on the dance movement, focusing on the fit and range of movement, so that the lion dancers can show various movements freely. The waist rope is designed to provide the support and fixation needed in a lion dance performance to ensure the stability of the lion dancers' movements and the coordination of difficult movements. The drawstring sweatpants are designed to focus on the freedom of movement and the presentation of stage effects, while maintaining comfort and flexibility.



Figure 1 Costumes and equipment for the Bangkok lion dance - close-fitting costumes

The choice of sports shoes is to consider the special needs of the dance movement, to provide good support and flexibility, of course, in the Bangkok Lion Dance performance of the human pyramid performers in the performance is not wearing shoes, but must wear a special strap, this special strap is designed to strengthen the human pyramid performer's legs, and the second is to facilitate the performance of the lower part of the staff to the upper part of the staff into the hand-held control, to control the stability of the performance.



Figure 2 Bangkok Lion Dance Costumes and Apparatus - Bound Legs and Bare Feet

The main shades of the Bangkok lion dance costumes include matching colours such as red, yellow, green and white, which are distinctive and bright, and have special symbolic meanings in Thai culture and lion dance culture, embodying the symbolism of joy, wealth, good fortune and health.



Figure 3 Bangkok lion dance costumes and apparatus - costume colours

The costumes of the Bangkok lion dance are often designed with distinctive cultural markers, which are meant to showcase the culture to which they belong, to convey the symbolism of good luck and blessings, and to highlight the identity and values of the team. The cloud, fire, dragon and ruyi patterns on the costumes are often seen as auspicious motifs that convey a sense of joy, blessing and peace during the performance. The Chinese name of the team, the Thai name, and the team's beliefs are also marked on the clothes. These patterns and logos are chosen not only for their aesthetic appeal, but also as a way of presenting and passing on the culture they carry.



Figure 4 Costumes and apparatus of Bangkok lion dance

In addition, sometimes commercial advertisements may appear on the costumes of the Bangkok Lion Dance, visually reflecting the support of commercial funding for the lion dance team. On some occasions, commercial sponsorships may provide financial support to help the team with artistic performances, enhancement of the

quality of the lion dance, and promotional activities. Such commercial support is partly a reflection of the maturity and healthy development of the lion dance movement, and also provides sponsors with branding and promotional opportunities.



Figure 5 Costumes and implements of the Bangkok Lion Dance - Costume commercials

2.1.2 Lion heads in Bangkok lion dance performances

Lion heads are an important part of the Bangkok Lion Dance performance, and they embody rich cultural connotations and artistic expressions through careful design and production. The lion head used in Bangkok lion dance is the core element of the whole performance, which carries rich cultural and symbolic meanings. In terms of design, lion heads can be made from materials such as steel, bamboo, wood and paper, which are skilfully constructed, carved, painted and decorated by craftsmen to give them a vivid and realistic appearance and unique features.



Figure 6 Costume and apparatus of the Bangkok - production and painting of the lion's head

Similar to international lion dance lion head designs, the lion head of the Bangkok Lion Dance also has features such as the lion head with hair whiskers, the heavenly court, the lion horns, the nose, eyes, ears, mouth, tongue and teeth, and the neck of the lion (the mouth can be opened and closed, and the eyes can be blinking and moving), which are mainly in pursuit of the appearance of beauty and realism, and more importantly, the lion's power, majesty, and mobility are demonstrated through the expression of the form, which increase the lion head's expression and visual effect.



Figure 7 Costumes and equipment of the Bangkok Lion Dance - parts of the lion's head

Some lion dance teams also install LED lights on the lion's head, which is related to the fact that the Bangkok Lion Dance is often performed at night, and the use of LED lights gives the lion's head more light and shadow effects, which makes the lion dance performances more eye-catching and lively in the night scene.



Figure 8 Costume and apparatus of Bangkok lion dance - LED lion head

In terms of form, the lion heads performed in the Bangkok Lion Dance are mostly in the form of the Foshan lion head form, the Heshan lion head form, the Fohe lion head form, and the Hong Kong lion head form, among many other forms. In terms of colour and character design, the Bangkok Lion Dance has the three main colours and classic characters of the lion heads of international lion dances: yellow (Liu Bei Lion), red (Guan Yu Lion), and black (Zhang Fei Lion), and on most of these lion heads most of the lion dance teams mark some Chinese characters to denote the nature of the lion, the name of the lion dance team, and so on. These markings can convey specific information through the glyphs and meanings of the Chinese characters, reflecting not only the artistic heritage of lion dance performances, but also the inclusiveness of regional cultures.



Figure 9 Costumes and implements of the Bangkok - Chinese characters on the lion's head

Due to the fusion of regional cultures, the Bangkok lion dance also favours green, white, mixed colours, etc. Large lion dance teams have more colours and varieties of lions, and some lion dance teams may also mark Thai cultural symbols and beliefs on their lion's head, for example, some lion dance teams add the image of the four-faced Buddha or mark Thai names, Thai blessings, etc., all of which are highly related to the history of the Thai lion dance culture and the traditional practices. related to the history and traditional practices of Thai lion dance culture, expressing a high degree of integration between Chinese and Thai cultures.



Figure 10 Costume and apparatus of Bangkok lion dance - Four-faced Buddha on the lion's head

In addition to the more distinctive designs, there are also zodiac lions, such as the Tiger Head Lion and the Rabbit Head Lion, where the lion head is combined with the Chinese zodiac to form the unique lion dance culture of the Bangkok Lion Dance. These shapes and colours are the new roles that the people of Bangkok have given to the lion heads, and this cultural blend and expression makes the Bangkok Lion Dance lion heads more diverse and unique.



Figure 11 Costume and apparatus of the Bangkok Lion Dance - Zodiac Lion (Tiger and Rabbit)

In general, the design and decoration of lion heads in the Bangkok Lion Dance are important and indispensable elements in the performance. They convey rich cultural connotations and symbolic meanings through the choice of materials, modelling and expression of logos, and at the same time show the fusion and innovation of different regional cultures. The design and decoration of these lion heads echo the music, movement and plot of the lion dance performance, and together they create the unique style of the Bangkok Lion Dance Performance.

2.1.3 The lion quilt, trousers and shoes of the Bangkok lion dance performance

The lion quilt of the Bangkok Lion Dance is an extension of the lion's head, which is connected by the neck of the lion's head portion of the lion's head (the neck of the lion is differentiated by different materials or colours). The lion quilt is made of fabric made of large capes made of ornate satin and richly ornamented, and is approximately 2 metres long, long enough to cover the performer's body and extend to the ground. The quilt is adorned with a full coat of hair, which is arranged in horizontal stripes at the front and vertical stripes at the back, making the lion's body more vivid and realistic. The lion quilt is wrapped around the performer to form the body part of the lion. The lion dancer bends his back and wears the lion quilt to match the movement of the lion's head, showing the form of the lion's body and tail, which is usually short, and can be manually shaken by the lion dancer to make the lion more lively and vivid. Because the colour of the lion's coat needs to match the colour of the lion's head, the colours of the lion quilt for Bangkok lion dance are also varied, almost covering red, orange, yellow, green, cyan, blue, purple, black, white, grey, mixed floral and so on. The choice of colours can be based on the occasion and significance of the performance, as well as on the nature of the event and the atmosphere of the mixing, in order to achieve a better visual effect and stage effect. In the design, the lion was most of the lion clothing is with is rounded full shape, showing the lion's majestic image.



Figure 12 Costumes and implements of the Bangkok Lion Dance - 9-colour lion quilt

Lion trousers and shoes are a regular part of the lion dancer's performance, and together with the lion quilt and the lion head, they form the complete lion dance image. The lion trousers are the underwear worn by the lion dancers and are usually made of soft, comfortable fabrics. They are designed to show the shape of the lion's legs, with fur trimmed in horizontal stripes, and have a loose fit and flexible stretch to allow the lion dancers to move freely during the performance. The colours of the lion trousers are coordinated with the lion's quilt and head, and are often chosen to be similar or contrasting to the quilt to maintain a consistent overall image.

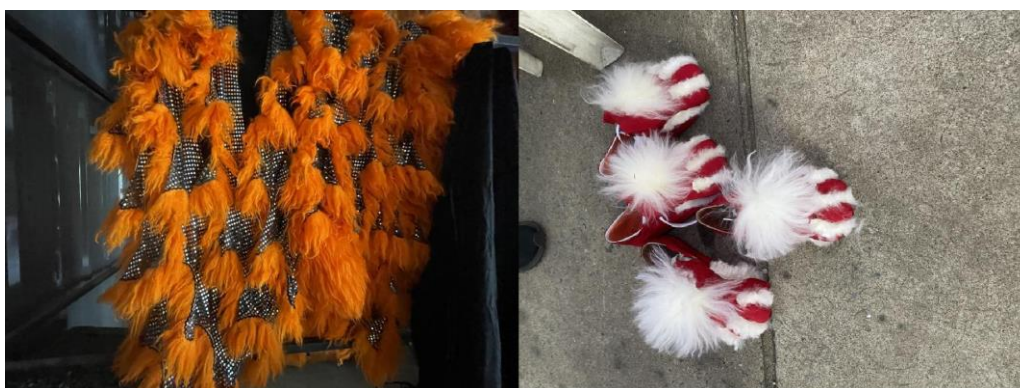


Figure 13 Costumes and implements of the Bangkok lion dance - lion trousers and lion shoes

Lion shoes are special shoes worn by lion dancers and their design echoes the image of the lion. Lion shoes are usually made of strong and durable materials with soft soles and comfortable linings to ensure the stability and flexibility of the lion dancers during the performance. The exterior of the lion shoes is often decorated with lion paw shapes and hair to enhance the realism and visual effect of the overall image. Lion trousers and lion shoes, as a regular accompaniment to a lion dance performance, are not only designed to add visual effect, but more importantly, to provide the lion dancers with comfortable wear and support for their movements. Their design and selection of materials have been carefully considered to ensure that the lion dancers are comfortable with the lion's dynamics and power, presenting the audience with an exciting and realistic lion dance performance.

2.1.4 Character Masks for the Bangkok Lion Dance Performance

Role masks in Bangkok lion dance performances are one of the core costumes in lion dance performances, they play various roles through colourful masks, and their duty is to play the role of guides in lion dance performances, assisting the lion dancers in completing some rituals, and at the same time, they can also cooperate with the lion dancers in their performances. The Big Head Buddha is one of the common masks used in Bangkok Lion Dance, also known as the Laughing Buddha because of his big head and smile on his face. The Big Head Buddha masks in Bangkok are divided into three types of masks, male, female and child, the masks are characterised by the male Big Head Buddha with a bald head, the female Big Head Buddha with hair depicted in black lacquer and with a mole at the corner of the mouth, and the child masks are characterised by a big head as well, but they are more adorable and playful compared to the adult characters, with Fufuwa-type red hair and different attire, and the three can be easily distinguished. The child's mask also has the same big head but is more cute and playful than the adult character, with red hair of the Fuwa type and a different costume. The Big Head Buddha costume is based on the performer's close-fitting costume with the addition of a long shirt and a large sunflower fan in order to better portray the character.



Figure 14 Costumes and implements of the Bangkok Lion Dance - character masks (Land God, Land Woman)

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In addition to the male Big Head Buddha and female Big Head Buddha, the masked characters in the Bangkok Lion Dance include the God of Wealth, the Star of Longevity, and the God of Jeet Kune Do. The God of Fortune mask represents wealth and good luck holding a golden treasure prop, the Longevity Star mask symbolises longevity and good fortune, sometimes using peaches as props to represent a long and healthy life, and the Jigong mask character usually displays a wealth of movements and expressions, holding a wine jar as a prop in his hand, imitating the actions of drinking, such as sipping wine, lifting the glass, getting drunk, etc., to express the character's personality traits in a hyperbolic and comical way. It brings a relaxed and joyful atmosphere to the lion dance performance.



Figure 15 Costumes and apparatus of Bangkok lion dance - various types of character masks (God of Fortune, God of Fortune, Child, Jeet Kune Do, etc.)

Masked characters play an important role in Bangkok Lion Dance performances, as they present the audience with a variety of character images and emotional expressions through their unique mask designs and expressions. These masked characters are played by experienced performers who add a variety of cultural elements to the whole lion dance performance through their different roles.

2.2 General signage for the Bangkok Lion Dance: 2.2.1 Mobile Drum Stands

The mobile drum kit of the Bangkok Lion Dance is an indispensable core piece of equipment for the lion dance team. It allows the performers to move freely during the performance and to fix the drums in a suitable position. This mobile drum stand is usually made of strong metal or alloy material to ensure stability and durability. A mobile drum stand is made up of a drum stand, drum base, wheel axle, and offering table.



Drum Frame: The drum frame is the main part of the mobile drum stand, which provides support and stabilisation of the drum. The drum frame usually consists of multiple struts and connectors that form a structurally strong frame. It is able to support the weight of the drums and ensures that the drums do not wobble or tilt during a performance.

Drum Stand: The drum stand is the platform on which the drum is placed and is usually located on top of the drum kit. It can be a flat platform or a specially designed seat to accommodate different types and sizes of drums. A drum stand provides a firm foundation that allows the drum to be fixed in the correct position and provides a comfortable playing experience.

Axles: Mobile drum stands are usually equipped with axles to make them mobile. The axle is usually mounted on the bottom of the drum set, allowing the performer to easily move the drum set to different positions. This portability allows the lion dance to be performed in different venues, increasing the flexibility of the performance.

Offering Table: Family-style lion dance teams usually have a small offering table in front of the mobile drum stand. The offering table is set into the mobile drum stand and moves or stays fixed with the drum stand, adding to the convenience of rituals and offerings. Items such as the team's beliefs, statues or photographs are placed in the centre of the offering table, surrounded by flowers and tributes. This reflects the religious and cultural elements of the Bangkok Lion Dance performance and adds a sacred and solemn atmosphere to the performance.



Figure 17 Costumes and instruments of the Bangkok Lion Dance - the enshrined idol

The mobile drum stand of the Bangkok Lion Dance not only has the function of placing the instrumental drums, but also carries the important role of rituals and offerings. It is one of the core pieces of equipment for the performing team,

providing support and flexibility for the lion dance performance and demonstrating the importance of religious beliefs and cultural traditions.

2.2.2 Bangkok Lion Dance Team Lion Flag

The team flag of the Bangkok Lion Dance Team is one of the important identifiers in their performance, with unique symbolism and visual effects. The team flag usually consists of 3 or 5 sides, including a main flag and 2 to 4 secondary flags, to demonstrate the team's cohesion and the spirit of unity and co-operation. The size of these flags usually ranges from 1.5 to 3 metres, and is of an appropriate size to be able to display a distinctive feature in performances, as well as being easy to carry and handle. Through the display of the team flags, the audience can gain a deeper understanding of the characteristics and styles of the lion dance teams. The style and design of each team's flag is distinctive, with a variety of patterns on it, commonly including fire patterns, back patterns, flower patterns, phoenix patterns, ruyi patterns, etc. These patterns echo the design style of the lion dance, highlighting the team's artistic creativity and respect for traditional culture. The main flag is usually rectangular in shape and decorated with the team's signature elements. The main flag often displays a picture of the team's faith, the team's name in Chinese and Thai, and Chinese couplets. These couplets may express expectations for the development of the team, blessings from the gods, or other blessed phrases. These sentences are usually presented in pairs, giving a sense of rhythm and beauty.



Figure 18 Costumes and implements of the Bangkok Lion Dance - Lion Flag Main Flag

The secondary flags are decorative elements that complement the main flag, and their number can vary according to the preference and size of the group. The sub-flags are rectangular or triangular in shape, and since they are smaller than the main flag, they usually do not display more graphics than the team name. They are usually flown around the main flag and add a sense of splendour and dignity to the whole flag.



Figure 19 Costume and apparatus of the Bangkok Lion Dance - Lion Flag Sub-Flag

During a lion dance performance, the team flag is held by a flag stand and hung high in the air to add a unique atmosphere and visual effect to the lion dance. The flag may have a team logo, a team name and a meaningful Chinese couplet, all of which demonstrate the team's individuality and character, as well as represent the expectations for the team's development and success in the performance. The design of the Bangkok Lion Dance Team's flag reflects a strong regional cultural style, and seeks to fit in with the style of lion dance performance in order to convey a richer sense of meaning and emotion.

The meticulous craftsmanship and use of colours in the flags make them a striking highlight of the lion dance performances and have important symbolic meanings in the performances. They attract the audience's attention with their bright colours and unique decorations, creating a warm and festive atmosphere. The display of team flags not only adds to the visual effect of the performance, but also demonstrates the team's identity, religious beliefs and expectations for team development.

Functional apparatus of the Bangkok Lion Dance

In addition to the musical and costume instruments described above, other instruments used in the Bangkok Lion Dance include the lion dance stakes (Dok Ko Pole and Plum Blossom Stake), "Qing", couplets, flower balls, flags, fireworks, ceremonial items, etc. The lion dance is also performed with a variety of other instruments.

Dokko Pole

One of the special features of the Bangkok Lion Dance is a pole, which has a certain height and a function of fixing the lion dance. The material of the pole can be made of bamboo, wood, steel or a combination of modern materials, depending on the actual needs and requirements of the lion dance team. The pole usually has a certain height, usually more than 4 metres, to ensure that the lion dancers can stand in a higher position to perform and leave a deep impression on the audience. The base is usually fixed with a tripod to provide stable support and ensure that the monopole does not sway or tilt. The top of the monopole is usually fitted with welded clips to hold the lion dancers in place. The lion dancers are required to climb up the monopole and secure themselves with the carabiners in order to perform the lion dance at a high altitude. This design can increase the difficulty and spectacle of the performance and demonstrate the skills and hands of the lion dancers. It is worth noting that climbing up the monopole to perform requires the lion dancers to possess a certain level of physical fitness and skills to ensure safety and stability. The lion dancers need to be trained and honed in the correct climbing techniques and balance to ensure that they are able to perform comfortably at heights and display thrilling and unique lion dance manoeuvres.



Figure 20 Costume and apparatus of Bangkok Lion Dance - props Dokko pole

As a characteristic apparatus of the Bangkok lion dance performance, the one-height pole not only provides the safety function of fixing the lion dance performance, but also increases the difficulty and spectacle of the performance, so that the audience can enjoy a more wonderful visual experience when enjoying the lion dance performance.

Plum Blossom Stake

The plum blossom stake is one of the props commonly used in Bangkok lion dance performances, and there is not much difference in the design of the stake between the Bangkok lion dance and the international lion dance. The plum blossom pile is usually made of modern materials and has the characteristic of being easy to fix to ensure stability during the performance. The design of the plum blossom stakes usually consists of 21 stakes, which have an undulating height pattern, with the lowest stakes being about 0.5 metres high and the highest stakes being up to 3 metres high. This design enables the lion dance to form undulations of different heights during the performance, adding a sense of visual hierarchy and change, making the whole performance more vivid and rich.



Figure 21 Costume and apparatus of the Bangkok Lion Dance - Plum Blossom Piles

Each plum blossom pile has a fixed position and angle, and the lion dancers need to accurately jump or step on the piles, demonstrating great skill and balance. The layout of the Plum Blossom Piles and their undulating design provide a challenging stage for the lion dancers, who need to flexibly walk and jump on the piles at different heights in order to perform exciting lion dance movements and skills. Overall, the plum blossom piles, as important props in Bangkok lion dance performances, provide a stable stage and a rich form of expression for the lion dance performances with their unique design and easy fixing.

2.3.3 "Qing" Props

In international lion dances, picking the "Qing" is also a common traditional ritual. It is used by lion dance teams as part of their performance, both in Bangkok and elsewhere, to express blessings and gratitude. There may be some variations in this ritual in different cultures, such as the use of different objects or different symbolic meanings, but the common goal is to convey a message of joy, blessing and unity.



Figure 23 Costume and apparatus for the Bangkok lion dance - "Qing" (Chinese characters using oranges)

There are many different types of "Qing" used in Bangkok lion dance performances, the most common being the "flower Qing" on the plum blossom stakes, which is also sponsored by the organisers or merchants in addition to flowers. The most common is the "Flower 'Qing'" on the plum blossom stakes, which, in addition to the flower, has a baht sponsorship from the organiser or a merchant, which is regarded as encouragement for the performer and payment for the performance. On other occasions, the choice of 'baht' varies depending on the nature of the event. For example, kumquats represent wealth and good fortune, lettuce symbolises wealth and a good harvest, spring onions signify intelligence, pineapples and chillies are often used as decorations, and longan has an auspicious meaning.



Figure 24 Costumes and equipment for the Bangkok lion dance - "Qing" (lettuce, fruit, spring onions, etc.)

In the Bangkok Lion Dance, couplets are also seen as a form of "Qing" in a broader sense. Couplets are a traditional cultural element that expresses blessings and good fortune in the form of words. In lion dance performances, couplets are usually in the form of Chinese couplets, Thai couplets, and Thai-Chinese bilingual couplets. The size and content of the couplets vary according to the occasion of the performance, and common contents include "fortune", "congratulations", "happy birthday", "all the best", "all the best", "all the best", "all the best", "all the best", "all the best", "all the best", "all the best", "all the best". "All the best" and other blessings. The purpose of these couplets is still to convey blessings of happiness and good fortune. They convey good wishes to the audience through the form of words, forming a harmonious atmosphere with the lion dance performance. The selection and creation of the couplets is also one of the ways in which the lion dance team demonstrates artistic creativity and respect for traditional culture.

In addition to couplets, there are other broadly defined "Qing" used in Bangkok lion dance performances. Some lion dance teams choose modern packaged gifts as "Qing" and present them to the audience as an expression of blessing and gratitude. These gifts can be small tangible items, souvenirs, or gourmet food, so that the audience can be surprised and blessed while watching the performance. These "Qing" in the broad sense play an important role in the Bangkok Lion Dance, they enrich the form and content of the performance, so that the audience can more fully experience the atmosphere of celebration, blessings and thanksgiving.



Figure 25 Costumes and equipment for the Bangkok lion dance - "Qing" (couplets)

2.3.4 Fireworks and Lighting

Fireworks and lights in Bangkok lion dance performances exist as auxiliary elements of the lion dance performance. As Bangkok Lion Dance performances usually take place after evening, the use of fireworks and lighting can increase the visual effect and atmosphere of the performance. During the lion dance performance, fireworks can be lit at specific moments. The flashing and brilliance of the fireworks echoes the movements of the lion dance, increasing the visual impact and drama of the performance.



Figure 26 Costume and apparatus of Bangkok Lion Dance - Prop Fireworks

Ceremonial objects

In the Bangkok Lion Dance performances, various types of rituals often occur, and common ritual supplies include flowers, incense and candles, beverages, cigarettes, alcohol, dried fruits, various types of food, and weapon holders. The use of these items is related to the nature and size of the ceremony, and more items are usually used in larger ceremonies. Flowers play a decorative and blessing role in a lion dance ceremony. Flowers are placed on the ceremony site to add colour and vibrancy and to symbolise the beauty and prosperity of life.



Figure 27 Costumes and implements of the Bangkok Lion Dance - Ceremonial offerings (flowers, joss sticks, food, etc.)

Drinks, cigarettes, alcohol, dried fruits and food are part of the offerings used to show honour and gratitude to the gods or ancestors. They represent harvest, abundance and celebration and express blessings and gratitude to the gods or ancestors. Weapon racks are special props in the lion dance ceremony, where various weapons, such as knives, swords, guns, etc., are placed, firstly as decoration and secondly to highlight the culture and type of affiliation of the Bangkok lion dance team.

As the size and solemnity of the ceremony increases, the number and type of supplies will increase accordingly. Larger ceremonies may use more one is supplies to demonstrate the grandeur and solemnity of the ceremony. The selection and placement of these ceremonial supplies have specific meanings and symbolism, and they serve as decorations, blessings and expressions of respect in the Bangkok Lion Dance Ceremony. At the same time, they are part of the traditional culture and through the use of these supplies, the lion dance team is able to pass on and demonstrate the unique charm and cultural value of the Bangkok Lion Dance.

Discussion

In the field of performing arts, the theory of visual culture studies involves the study and analysis of visual elements, symbols and visual expressions in performance. This theoretical framework combines the concepts of visual culture, semiotics and performing arts with the aim of understanding the meaning, symbolism and cultural context of visual elements in performance. The social identity and role expression of Bangkok lion dance within this framework is focused on the role of character costumes and props in conveying social identity and role expression in performance.

Through the costumes and paraphernalia of the Bangkok Lion Dance, we can see that there are four roles involved in the performance: the deity or ancestor, the lion (the lion dancer), the orchestra and the Big Head Buddha. The role of the deity or ancestor plays an important part in the costumes and apparatus, and their images appear in all corners of the room, emphasising their sanctity and majesty through ornate costumes and decorations with religious symbolism; the lions are the roles played by the performers, who wear specific lion dance costumes. These costumes are usually made of fur and mimic the appearance of a lion, including parts of the head, body and tail. The lion dancers will wear lion headgear and mimic the lion's movements and demeanour through their movements and expressions, thus playing the role of the lion perfectly; the orchestra is responsible for providing music and rhythm during the performance. They usually wear traditional lion dance costumes and use specific instruments and implements such as drumsticks. These costumes and instruments not only help them to play the music, but also add to the atmosphere and visual effect of the whole performance; the Big Head Buddha is a special character in the Bangkok Lion Dance, who plays the role of a cute and comical figure. Big Head Buddhas usually wear huge head coverings with exaggerated facial expressions and features such as smiles, big eyes and ears, giving a sense of joy and celebration. Their costumes are usually brightly coloured and richly decorated with ornate clothing, hats and accessories to highlight their special role and image

In fact, in the field of social sciences, many scholars have studied the function of clothing as a sign and symbol and delved into the role of clothing in society and its relationship with social roles. For example, in his book *Ways of Seeing* (1972), the British artist John Berger proposed the important role of clothing in social identity, social etiquette, demonstration of power and social change. In addition, there is a general consensus among many sociologists, anthropologists and cultural researchers that each individual plays a specific social role in a specific space and time, and that the society gives that role certain powers and obligations, as well as prescribes norms of behaviour, and helps them with dress props, such as police

uniforms for policemen, red cards for referees, and taipans for general managers (Liu Jian, 1999, p. 2). Individuals express their social roles and identities by choosing and wearing specific costumes. Clothing is not only a functional object, but also a cultural symbol that reflects the social group, occupation, status, gender, etc., to which an individual belongs through its appearance and style. People judge the identity and roles of others based on their costumes in social interactions and thus evaluate and treat them. These costumes and implements of the Bangkok Lion Dance not only highlight the characteristics and identity of each character, but also enhance the visual effect and ornamental value of the whole performance. They visually present different social roles and meanings, helping the audience to better understand and feel the roles played in the performance. The use of costumes and implements as well as the characterisation of the roles throughout the performance profoundly demonstrates the multi-social and cultural backgrounds and identities from which the Bangkok Lion Dance performances are derived. They convey the power and obligations that society gives to the roles: in terms of the roles' expression of power, one is to pray for blessings and exorcise evils, and those who play the lion dance are believed to be able to pray for good luck, happiness, and peace for the community or an individual, as well as to exorcise evils and diseases. This belief gives the lion dance role a special mystical power; secondly, it represents the gods. In some religious ceremonies, the lion dance is seen as the embodiment of the gods, representing the gods coming down to earth. The lion dance characters are in this case endowed with the power and majesty to symbolise the gods. In terms of role interpretation obligations, one is transmission and inheritance; lion dance performances are usually a traditional cultural expression that is passed down from generation to generation in communities and families. Lion dance characters are considered to have a duty to carry on this tradition and to pass on and preserve this cultural heritage; and secondly, spontaneous participation, where playing the role of a lion dance character is usually a socially expressive duty of spontaneous participation. Bangkok lion dance performances are an important part of many celebrations and festivals, and performing a lion dance role means contributing to the community or Thai society.

Conclusion

Bangkok lion dance costumes and implements define the behavioural norms of the established characters and help them present themselves on stage through costume props. The audience can better understand and feel the culture and emotions conveyed by the Bangkok Lion Dance performance through the visual presentation of these costumes and implements. The demonstration of different social roles and meanings through the costumes and implements of the Bangkok Lion Dance performance also confirms the research and theories in the social sciences on the use of costumes and implements as signs and symbols. They further reinforce the identification and differentiation of social roles by conveying information to the audience about social groups, occupations, status and gender through their appearance and style. This is achieved through virtuality and symbolic performance. The costumes and implements of the Bangkok lion dance are in a sense an expression of the style and characteristics of a part of Thai culture, as well as the lion dancers' representation and positioning of their self-identity in Thai society.

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