

Comment

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* “Physical Techniques of the Yao Ethnic Group (China) Related to Religious Rituals”
by ZHANG Jin Song

This paper illuminates the physical techniques observed in the religious rituals of the Guoshan-Yao people in Lanshan County, Hunan Province, including ritual dances, *zhijue*, *zhangjue*, *gangbu*, talisman making, divination and knife-ladder climbing. Some physical techniques carry religious connotations, while others embody activities in daily life. In this paper, the former type is called meaning representation and includes *Laojun-jue* and *Zushi-jue* (which belong to *zhijue*) and *Bagua-zhangjue*, while the latter is called shape representation and includes the *Chuantuan* dance, in which the performer pretends to look for, fool, chop up, cook and eat a soft-shell turtle.

Mr. Zhang extensively illustrates various physical techniques, including those used in the dance for summoning the spirits of ancestral masters. At the end of the paper, he concludes: “Physical techniques employed in the Yao’s religious rituals are meticulously prescribed, from how to hold each implement to how to move the hands, arms and legs, and cannot be altered arbitrarily.” Yet, in another part of the paper, he says, “Some *jue* are performed differently, depending on who the performer’s mentor was.” I wonder if these descriptions imply that mentors and schools are the chief factors characterizing how people makes physical expressions in Yao religious rituals.

Physical expressions may be vehicles for conveying nonverbal messages. Chinese adages include, “Teach by personal example as well as verbal instruction” and “Teach others by example.” Also, the word “model” is often used among Chinese people. As such this Chinese mentality indicates, physical expressions are sometimes more important than verbal ones.

Dance is an artistic form of moving the body and has its roots in shamanism. The close link between dance and shamanism is clearly spelled out in this paper.

With photographs and consummate prose, Mr. Zhang provides a lucid glimpse into Yao religious rituals and persuasively demonstrates his theory.

* “Physical Techniques Displayed by Divine Characters in Korean Mask Dramas”
by JEON Kyung-Wook

This paper presents a comprehensive study of divine characters in Korean mask dramas. Prof. Jeon delves into the two origins of mask dramas – traditional rites and Narye exorcism rituals – and underscores the influence of Chinese Narye on the evolution of mask dramas.

He also casts light on the two types of masked divine characters. The first group includes Kakshi, Namgang

Old Man, Yeonip, Nunkkumjeoki and Gangneung Gwanno Mask Drama characters, whose appearance and functions fully manifest their divinity. The second group includes Chwibari and eight Meokjung, who are worldly characters with respect to identity, character and appearance but still retain some functions as holy beings.

In addition to these two categories of masked characters, Prof. Jeon refers to Somu. She was a divine character in Narye, with her brother Zhong Kui (鐘馗) being a main character exorcising evil spirits in the ritual. Yet, in extant mask dramas, she is an ordinary woman who carries no divine aspects at all.

This paper reveals the connection between Narye and mask dramas, relating physical techniques to the forms and colors of masks. Jeon says that Nunkkumjeoki evokes the image of the Pangsangshi mask, whose hallmark is its four golden eyes. He further states that the Eight Meokjung Dance, in which Meokjung monks hit each other with peach or willow branches, reflects the influence of Narye, in which people pretended to beat evil spirits with peach branches.

With respect to Somu, I would like to draw attention to the fact that the original and correct form of the Chinese phrase “鐘馗嫁妹” (“Zhong Kui (鐘馗) marries off (嫁) his younger sister (妹)”) was “鐘馗嫁魅” (“Zhong Kui expels (嫁) demons (魅)”). The word 嫁魅 means to get rid of a demonic curse by letting something else bear it. Yet the letters 妹 (“younger sister”) and 魅 (“demon”) have the same pronunciation, “mèi,” and the letter 嫁 has two meanings: to release and to marry a man. As people’s religious faith diminished, they mistakenly perceived 嫁魅 as 嫁妹 and wove the folk story of Zhong Kui Jia Mei (鐘馗嫁妹), in which Zhong Kui marries off her sister.

Therefore, I think it is of great value to study whether the story of Zhong Kui Jia Mei has any link to Somu.

* “Analysis of Physical Techniques through *Kashira* Puppets – A Comparison of Japanese and Chinese Puppets” by OHYATSU Sanae

This paper explores the physical techniques employed in *Bunraku* puppet theater, especially the characteristics and genesis of the *Sambaso* puppet. Prof. Ohyatsu argues that, for three major reasons, the *Shikisamban* play in puppet shows is different from that in the *Noh* theater, although the former shows the influence of the latter.

First, while the three characters in *Shikisamban* – that is, *Senzai*, *Okina* and *Sambaso* – all appear on stage together in *Noh*, many puppet plays feature only *Sambaso*.

Second, in order to carry out the “nodding” movement in which the face looks up, many *Sambaso* puppets have rod-pulling equipment, the oldest existing nodding mechanism. In contrast, there is no uniformity in the nodding mechanisms of *Senzai* and *Okina* puppets. In addition, while a *Sambaso* puppet can change its facial expression from smiling to a countenance signifying either a threatening or humorous attitude, *Sambaso* in *Noh* only has a smiling expression.

Third, the face of a *Sambaso* puppet is painted red or a similar color, while *Sambaso* in *Noh* never has a

reddish face.

Based on these facts, Prof. Ohyatsu surmises that, among the three characters in the *Shikisamban* play in puppet shows, the *Sambaso* puppet was originally created as a religious symbol, and the roles of *Senzai* and *Okina* were added later. She notes that further studies are required to elucidate the reason why the rod-pulling manipulation style is not found in Chinese puppets. I marveled at her perceptive insights into *Sambaso* puppets, intriguing thoughts and unique conclusions.

In China, puppets, or *muou*, are also called *kuilei* (傀儡). Some studies suggest that their prototypes are human figures buried in graves in ancient China. The Book of Later Han, a history book compiled in the fifth century, says that the *kuilei* puppet show was originally entertainment for families observing a mourning period and came to be performed at parties at the end of the Han Dynasty. Meanwhile, according to “Kairaishiki,” which was written in the 11th century by Japanese scholar Oe no Masafusa, *kugutsushi* (傀儡子) puppeteers originally came from a region to the north of China. The book says that a *kugutsushi* woman had long, thin eyebrows, wore makeup that made her look as if she had been weeping, hobbled as if her legs could not support her body, and smiled contorting her mouth. I wonder if these characteristics have any relationship with physical expressions exhibited in Japanese puppet shows.

I should mention that physical expressions of puppets are characterized by two remarkable features. First, puppets are objects manipulated by people, and their physical expressions obliquely reflect people’s thoughts. Second, although we can make a variety of physical expressions with a puppet, its body and facial movements have limitations that account for the distinctive qualities of the puppet’s physical expressions.