

# Research of the Island Folk Sports “Flea Dance”

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## Abstract:

Folk dance is an indispensable part of folk sports activities. In 1985, "Flea dance" was included in the National National Dance Collection, and in 2005, it was listed in the first batch of Intangible cultural Heritage protection list of Zhejiang Province. Its inheritor, He Zhifu, was positioned as the representative inheritor of Zhejiang Intangible cultural Heritage (Flea Dance). Flea dance is now one of the 20 endangered traditional folk arts to be saved and is applying for intangible cultural heritage protection from The State Council. "Flea dance", as a dance project of an island city, has the distinctive characteristics of folk sports dance. It can quickly catch the attention of the audiences as soon as its entrance and has become a wonderful curiosity among various folk sports dances. This is because flea dance presents a style totally different from the others, and owns uniquely social metaphor and cultural connotation. Investigating and exploring its modern evolution and cultural significance will facilitate to promoting the inheritance and development of this intangible cultural heritage project, and provide a reference for other folk sports dances. With comprehensive application of literature and interview, this paper reviews, analyzes, and interprets the flea dance thoroughly. Among the unique characteristics of flea dance, "Carnival Dance" displays the happiness and open-mindedness of fishermen. "Drama Action" implies the social imagine of fishermen seeking protection. "Men disguised as women" coincides with the traditional gender concept. "Funny absurdity" interprets the deliberate avoidance from rationality. "Flirting and teasing" restores the original lust of human nature. "Audience interaction" represents the construction and identification of social relations. "Flea dance" is a complex of religious symbols, artistic performances and folk sports with the unique style of island fishermen. Its modern evolution is embodied in three dimensions of mythic "meaning" in connotation, integration and symbiosis in structure, and pluralistic reconstruction in style. "Flea dance" is a complex of religious symbols, artistic performances and folk sports. In the process of inheritance and development, it has undergone a series of modern changes and made great efforts for the vigorous extension of its vitality.

**Keywords:** Flea dance, Folk sports, Dance.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

"Flea dance" is also known as the "kitchen dance" or "kitchen club". Baiquan Town in Dinghai District of Zhoushan the Island City is with a very long period of folk culture. Its history can be traced back to the Neolithic Age before 6000 years. There has been a "Neolithic site at Baiquan crossroad". According to the records of Dinghai county annals, flea dance was formed around the 55th year of Emperor Qianlong's reign in the Qing Dynasty (A.D. 1790) and sustained for over 200 years. It was originally a folk dance

performed at the religious festival, harvest celebration and sea sacrificial ceremony on Zhoushan Island. Flea dance was normally performed with "boat dance" or "boat lamp move" at the same time. The performer would follow the moves of the boat lamps. Flea dancers usually perform at the gates of rich families or on the bows of fishing boats for rewarded foods. Similar to traditional martial arts, the dance name was changed to "flea dance" because their posture resembled the moves of fleas. In the 11th year of the Republic of China (A.D. 1922), Mr. Zhang Xiaoshan, who taught in Baiquan private school, reformed flea dance by incorporating the story of "Jigong versus god of fire". This provided flea dance with an explicit plot and an intriguing cultural connotation. Afterward, flea dance was incorporated into the "Collection of National Dances" in 1985. In 2005, it was listed in the first batch of protection list of intangible cultural heritage in Zhejiang Province, and its inheritor He Zhifu was recognized as the representative heir of intangible cultural heritage (flea dance) in Zhejiang Province. Flea dance has been one of the 20 traditional folk arts on the verge of extinction and therefore is applying to the China State Council for specific protection of intangible cultural heritage.

## II. MODERN INTERPRETATION OF TRADITIONAL FLEA DANCE

The traditional flea dance exhibits distinct attributes and reflects the unique customs and social ethics of island fishermen. It is also a basis for perceiving the structure of social relations, the social-psychological characteristics, and folk customs.

### 2.1 "Carnival Dance" Displays the Happiness and Open-mindedness of Fishermen

"Carnival Theory" was proposed by Bakhtin, a Russian philosopher and literary theorist, in the Study of Rabelais. The concept of "square" in Bakhtin's carnival theory has formed a "universal" square of equality and liberty. Bakhtin revealed that the square is a national symbol and the basic stage for carnival performances [1]. The performance of flea dance in the festival undoubtedly creates a space for the national carnival. "Various forms of folk festivals, while declining and degenerating, have already passed on a series of factors like rituals, props and images to the Carnival. The Carnival has virtually become a reservoir of accommodating those forms of folk festivals that no longer exist independently" [2]. The activity content of flea dance is more likely a kind of self-amusement and entertainment, which has not developed into the form of "upside-down world". Flea dance usually needs a bronze drum for one performer to carry on his/her back and knock on it. In addition, it also requires Tuoluo, Tangluo, GouJiaoluo, Pangluo, and Che Zi. By this way, there will be nine artists dancing in a row, followed by a large group of partners carrying flags and lighting fireworks, and surrounded by a crowd viewing along the way. The more viewers there are, the more vigorously artists will dance, trying their best skill to perform side dance, sit dance and sleep dance [3]. The unique jumps with "big splayfooted gait" of flea dance resemble a fishing boat bumping forward in the strong winds and waves. The shrugs and setbacks of the dancers' shoulders are clearly imitating the tenacious fight against the winds and waves. The repression and depression due to the lack of supplies and struggling livelihoods in traditional society can be alleviated by a moment of relaxation and pleasure in the "Carnival dance". It reflects the optimistic and open-minded personality of island fishermen. Simultaneously, to relieve the difficulties and loneliness during the

seafaring life, fishermen "sing loudly" and "jump with big strides" on the boat decks. They also perform the "half-squat jump with big splayfooted gait" of the basic martial arts "Horse Gait" formed on the fluctuating hulls of boats. These are not only a leisure pastime but also a folk sports exercise at the vast sea, which highlights the fitness and entertainment of flea dance on the fishing boats.

## 2.2 "Drama Action" Implies the Social Psychology of Fishermen Seeking Protection

"Dance" was a universal existence in ancient societies. During the war, sacrifice, labor and entertainment, people used "dance" to pray for gods' protection and elimination of disasters and diseases, to repay for gifts of gods, or to express the nostalgia for ancestors. Flea dance was originally an integral part of the "boat dance", with the performers dancing after the "boat lamp". It was a kind of convoy ceremony for the lamp and a symbol of expelling and suppressing evil spirits. Flea dance used to imply the good wishes of island fishermen to seek god's protection for their fishing boats and prevention of disasters and diseases. On the one hand, the highly dramatized flea dance was very similar to the ritual of "Dancing to gods" in northern China, with the same purpose of expelling and suppressing evil [4]. Dancing to gods was the main cultural way of Shamanism, which included "holding a trumpet, singing and dancing wildly, and completing the process of self-deification by four steps of inviting the god (sacrifice), accepting the god (removing the soul), leading the god (attaching to the body) and sending the god (restoring the soul)" [5]. It was a ritual process of profound self-alienation and domestication, which indicated people's psychological fear of nature and their worship, dependence and prayer for divine powers. On the surface, "Dancing to gods" was wild but represented a divine power to communicate with the gods. The "rough" and "leaping and jumping" steps of flea dance also symbolized a way of body narration to talk with the gods. On the other hand, assigning a role of flea dance as "Jigong" also reflected the psychology of seeking protection. "Relic Inscription of Huyin Fangyuan Sou" by Ju Jian described Jigong as "wild and careless, concerned and clean, speaking irrespective of norms". Among numerous ancient Chinese deity beliefs, "Jigong belief was the integration of native Chinese culture and imported Buddhist culture, and a process in which Chinese people reposed their minds with the native deities" [6]. Jigong's powerful magic and "madness" were well-known among the people. He was regarded as more "people-friendly" than the other gods and naturally became the first choice for people to place faith in and seek protection from. Jigong, the "Tiantai Buddha" who "fought evil with unlimited power", had been recognized as the "Patron" of Zhoushan fishermen, representing the religious symbolism of flea dance to these islanders.

## 2.3 "Men Disguised as Women" Coincides with the Traditional Gender Concept

"Men disguised as women" was not an uncommon phenomenon in ancient Chinese culture. "The concepts of 'Yin and Yang' and Bisexuality" often appeared in culture and literature, which was the fundamental reason for the emergence of 'men disguised as women' [7]. Lu Xun once made a radical argument that "the greatest, the most permanent and the most universal 'art' in China had been disguising men as women." Chinese opera always had the tradition of "men disguised as women". Mei Lanfang, a master of Chinese Beijing opera arts, was a famous actor disguised as an actress. Though different from Beijing opera, the disguise in the flea dance was not supposed to be impeccable but more likely to be impressive. Gestures like "making a big white face", "painting both cheeks red" and "pointing a black mole

on the nose-wing", deliberately indicated their "acting" element. Due to the physical contact between male and female roles during the performance being strictly prohibited by the forceful rule of "no-touch between men and women" in traditional society, the disguise might be a strategic improvisation to temporarily break the rule and facilitate the teasing performance. In addition, the humble status of women in traditional society gave them no chance to perform on stage. "Men and women performing on the same opera stage would be considered immoral. The entertaining dramas for thank-god, temple fair and celebration had often been performed by the courts and the commons, which all rejected the inferior women in case of colliding, offending or blaspheming the 'gods' [8]. This explained the prevalence of men disguised as women in traditional folk sports dances from the social concept of gender discrimination. The transformation of flea dance from "men disguised as women" to "women on stage" reflected the demand for feminist self-expression and the resetting of female roles in modern society, as well as the recognition of gender difference and gender equality in modern society.

#### 2.4 "Funny Absurdity" Interprets the Deliberate Avoidance from Rationality

Sartre mentioned in "The Interpretation of Outsider" that the word "absurdity" had "two very different meanings in Camus's works, it was not only a state of fact but also some people's clear consciousness of this state" [9]. In the performance of flea dance, the female role usually carries a prop "toilet" in one hand and a "toilet broom" in the other hand to chase the male. The male will carry a "chamber pot" commonly known for urination, and act to occasionally drink a mouthful of "urine" from the pot (filled with clean water). Such absurd interpretation is actually a kind of nonsense "surrealism", and its cultural meaning has the duality of conflicts. It is not only a "replay" of real life but also a "super-rational" and "super-realistic" narrative, expressing both "sober consciousness" and deliberate avoidance from realistic rationality. First of all, the "chasing and beating" of women to men is a portrayal of common family conflicts in secular society, which presents a "familiar" atmosphere in the performance for the audience and resonates with them by producing teasing and funny effects. Secondly, performances like "drinking urine" are an absurdity against realistic rationality. Absurdity refers to "the situation that violates common sense and rationality in plot and character behavior". The absurd performance against realistic rationality can incessantly bring surprise to the audience, produce visual excitement, and comply with the aesthetic concept of seeking innovation and distinction in secular culture. But it also has an intense secular atmosphere. Actually, in traditional folk cultures including religious activities, some secular interests are inevitably introduced into the presentation of entertainment. Fisk, an American theorist of mass culture, once said, "the pleasure of the public must be the pleasure of the oppressed, containing factors like confrontation, evasion, offense, vulgarity, resistance and so on" [10]. In the funny absurdity, the performers and audience of flea dance express their deliberate avoidance from rationality, enjoy the pleasure of resistance and offense, and reflect the functional transformation of flea dance from "entertaining gods" to "entertaining oneself and people".

#### 2.5 "Flirting and Teasing" Restores the Original Lust of Human Nature

The "three obediences and four virtues" in traditional society had become a shackle that imprisoned the spirits of Chinese women. Men and women were constrained by feudal ethics, and the original instinct of

human nature was suppressed. The male and female roles of flea dance fully exhibit the romance and pursuit of love by men and women, which raises a strong anti-structural sentiment in public. It gives the observer (audience) the release of repressed instinct and the restoring of restrained emotional "oneself". The "mutual gaze" between the male and female roles, and all the performances of "teasing", "tempting", "seducing", "raging", "laughing", "flattery smiling" and "false staggering" are neither directly publicizing pornographic interests nor openly provoking the fundamental ethical order of society. They are merely a traditional folk art form of expression accommodating the secular entertainment of the audience, conveying and delivering human love and desire through looks and dances. "Folk desire for life is often suppressed by the ethics of mass society. However, the power of such emotional desire is both primitive and powerful" [11]. There needs to be a form of entertainment to release "oneself". Among the performance projects of one man and one woman, the "Northeast Errenzhuan" is the best-known one. Its form is quite similar to that of flea dance, which is also reflected in the "opposite dance, teasing dance, turning dance" by the two roles of clown and female. However, the performance of "Northeast Errenzhuan" on the sexual theme is further blunt and vulgar. It does not only contain the element of "flirting" in the dance moves, but also includes the expression of "dirty talk" or "sex talk" in the oral form, while the flea dance is more euphemistic and elegant in restoring free love and sincerity of human life instinct.

## 2.6 "Audience Interaction" Represents the Construction and Identification of Social Relations

Flea dance does not satisfy the "mutual gaze" relationship with the audience but applies frequent interaction to build intimacy and to construct social relations. "Jigong's antics also hurt the audience by teasing women blushed and embarrassed but attracting the laughter of onlookers" (Putuo's intangible cultural heritage · collection volume). Generally speaking, the performer of flea dance as the "gazed" subject has also become a special cultural symbol in the village community. It represents the identity of social relations and constructs the collective cultural image known and shared by the commons. "This dance usually takes three days to cover all the villages, after which the performers will become rather famous. All villagers around can recognize the performers from the roundtrips, making them even more famous than those on TV" [12]. Folk sports activities have always been regarded as "an important way to sort out the social relations within and between the neighboring villages" [13]. People in the village community "realize the sacred 'presence' sharing before the sense of identity consciously flowing into the members of ethnic groups" [14]. Like all kinds of celebrities, flea dancers are a representation of socially common values, which can construct identification and further concentrate emotions. As a folk cultural symbol, flea dance forms a specific common experience and collective memory under a specific occasion, which can effectively promote social identity. At the same time, internalizing this cultural symbol into each individual's self-cognition and seeking their sense of cultural belonging are rather conducive to the construction of harmonious social relations.

In short, flea dance presents a complex of religious symbols, artistic performances and folk sports. In terms of internal driving force from its characteristics, the regional environmental factors are shown by "Carnival dance" displaying the happiness and open-mindedness of fishermen and "Drama action"

implying the social psychology of fishermen seeking protection. The social humanistic factors are exhibited by "Men disguised as women" coinciding with the traditional gender concept and "Audience interaction" representing the construction and identification of social relations. The human-nature origination factors are manifested by "Funny absurdity" interpreting the deliberate avoidance from rationality and "Flirting and teasing" restoring the original lust of human nature.

### III. MODERN EVOLUTION OF FLEA DANCE AND ITS CULTURAL CONNOTATION

The modern evolution of flea dance is prominently reflected in three aspects of pluralistic reconstruction in style, mythic "meaning" in connotation, and integration and symbiosis in structure. In the modern evolution, this highlights the cultural significance under the pluralistic actions of social, political, economic and other factors.

#### 3.1 Pluralistic Reconstruction in Style

##### 3.1.1 Maintain the reasonable tension between "vulgarity" and "elegance"

From the perspective of cultural genesis, mass culture possesses originality. It is a cultural form opposite to the elegant culture. As an island folk sport, the traditional flea dance is a typical mass culture, which mainly focuses on the mutual flirting between an actor and the other disguised as an actress. Therefore, the flirting can be more "causal" but lacking substantive content or connotation. Thanks to the popularity and public expressiveness in the form of folk culture, the traditional flea dance has been widely liked by people for meeting their entertainment needs. However, "it is no secret that the mass culture has difficulty in avoiding the interference and influence from vulgar and philistine elements, resulting in frequent expressions of vulgarity and philistinism". Even though, "elegant culture and mass culture are mutually transformable, while the mass culture can be processed and improved by artist's practice into the fine art" [15]. After modern evolution, flea dance has taken a step further towards the elegant culture and reduced the flirty parts between male and female roles. This dance also appropriately weakened the overly frivolous and exaggerated moves and increased the blessing content with cultural connotation. Inclination from mass to elegant culture by stylistic shifts is not only the temporal needs of the audience, but also the guarantee for flea dance to enhance its stage vitality. Making stylistic shifts and maintaining reasonable tension between "vulgarity" and "elegance" have to be kept abreast with each other. At the same time of preserving their traditions and universality, the contents of their mainstream value and aesthetic value are both available for improvement.

##### 3.1.2 From "wild field" to "modern stage"

The change of space also leads to the "deconstruction and reconstruction" of visual expressions like dressing and staging styles of flea dancers. Stage space is not only a platform for performance but also a symbol of performance style. In 1953, He Zhifu as a folk artist from Baiquan town in Dinghai district was invited to perform flea dance for the very first time in the auditoriums of major villages and towns in the

county, which symbolized the beginning of flea dance transferring from "wild field" like temple fair to "modern stage". The style of performance in temple fairs is "parading", just like marching on the street. Besides, it is performed on the bow of a fishing boat at leisure for entertainment and exercise. Flea dance has little demand for space, which is one of the reasons why flea dance has been popular among fishermen. However, the "stage style" is fixed on the stage, with the performance content as the core and the stage space as the carrier, which puts forward the new requirements. The presentation of stage art is inseparable from the visual embodiment, and the decoration by costumes and accessories has been a significant part of the visual embodiment. The modernization of flea dance highlights the word "beauty" to match the high-tech lighting and audio conditions of modern stage. For example, the coiled hairstyle of the goddess of fire is innovated by a very bright headdress made of shiny beads, which looks dazzling under the spotlight. While moving towards the modern stage, flea dance has won numerous honors and been recognized by various sectors of society. In 2010, flea dance appeared as a guest performance at the opening ceremony of the first Athletic Games in Zhejiang Province on behalf of Zhoushan Islands, which was appreciated by the majority of the audience. In 2013, flea dance stood out of many competing teams and won the most dynamic award in the performance party of "Beautiful Intangible Heritage: 'Taishun Covered-Bridge Cup' of Zhejiang web-searching intangible heritage". Since early June 2009, more than 30 primary schools in Zhoushan have organized pupils of first and second grade to learn flea dance on a daily basis. Flea dance is now regularly performed on the Intangible Cultural Heritage Day every June under the organization of Dinghai District or Zhoushan Municipal Office of Intangible Cultural Heritage. It has already been a permanent program for the marine cultural festival in Zhoushan Archipelago New Area.

### 3.1.3 From "entertaining gods and people" to "entertaining oneself and exercising"

Marcel Moss proposed the well-known "Gift Exchange Theory" after an in-depth investigation and analysis of literature and ethnographic cases. The essential attribute of "Kula" and "Potlatch" is a type of "general contribution system", which reveals and restricts various social systems. Traditional flea dance is a kind of Moss's "gift" exchange method. It is a folk sports dance of "entertaining gods" and "entertaining people". In the rituals of offering sacrifices to "entertaining gods", the gods' protection and blessing are regarded as "gifts" to receive in exchange with gods. Solving livelihood problems by the performance of "entertaining people" at the sacrificial ceremony for the kitchen-god, and performing at the door of a rich family or on the bow of the boat for foods are all representations of exchanging for "gifts". The modern flea dance, on top of the "entertaining" performances, is more like a type of "entertaining oneself and exercising". The basic moves of "jump with big splayfooted gait" by the male role have always been exercised in the form of "Horse Gait" as one of the fundamental skills in martial arts. It requires the upper body to keep straight and exercise some specified actions, which demands extensive skill and strength. As a result, a flea dance often sweats and exercises the body of the dancer. Moreover, the "jump with big splayfooted gait" is a kind of posture imitating the fishing boat's courageous sailing through the wind and waves. Because the boat is tilted by the swing of the sail during the voyage, the men and women in flea dance will also tilt their body posture to a certain extent and jump to the left and right. They shrug up and somersault forward like the rolling of the waves, and they "dance in circles" like the whirlwinds at sea" [16]. By the dance postures with marine characteristics, the exercisers immerse themselves in the joy of

sailing at sea to achieve the effect of "entertaining oneself".

### 3.2 Mythic "Meaning" in Connotation

Levi Strauss once said, "myths and rituals are far from being the product of the 'fictional function' of human beings deviating from reality, as people often claim. Their main value is to preserve the residual observation and reflection methods that were (undoubtedly still are) suitable for a certain type of discovery to this day" [17]. Myth, as the wisdom expression by the early ancestors, represents the gene of culture, which is not a nihility completely divorced from reality. "Myth can be regarded as a type of spiritual self-regulation by primitive people on the conflicts between 'intention' and 'incompetence' (or inferiority)" [18]. In the past, when fishermen were fishing in the sea, they feared fire onboard the most. Once a fishing boat got ignited, the fire would be very difficult to extinguish due to putties and other flammable substances in the cracks of the boat planks. Fishermen were often burned to death in the gruesome scenes, therefore the survived ones prayed for a Buddha to defeat the God of Fire in the protection of fishermen from sufferings. Bart believed that myth was "depoliticized speech" [19], meaning people cared about the truth of myth much less than its practical use to themselves. As a result, they often create myths according to their own needs. The myth of flea dance named "Jigong versus God of Fire" provided people with actual satisfaction of spiritual demands. It was told that when Jigong was a monk in Jingci temple in Hangzhou, the God of Fire incarnated as a pretty girl to enter the temple in an attempt for arson. Jigong saw through the mystery and stopped her at the door, the temple abbot had no idea but blamed Jigong for alleged harassment. Jigong then asked him whether it was better to keep the temple or not, in reply the abbot mistook "temple" for "thing" and confirmed that "nothing is certainly better". This gave Jigong no excuse but to leave, the God of Fire then successfully entered and burned down the Jingci temple. Only after inquiring Jigong, the abbot came to understand his original intention to prevent the pretty girl. The flea dance is endowed with "meaning" from the myth of "Jigong versus God of Fire", which represents the people's prayer to Buddha Jigong for protecting their fishing boats from fire.

### 3.3 Integration and Symbiosis in Structure

#### 3.3.1 Personnel structure

The variations in the structure of flea dancers are reflected in their gender and quantity. First of all, in terms of gender composition, it has achieved a reform from "men disguised as women" to "women on stage". Flea dance was originally performed by two men. One man disguised as a woman belonged to the "Dan role", who "played a big white face, painted two cheeks red, and pointed a black mole on the nose-wing", acting with a funny look of "vixen". Another male dancer, with a straw cane wrapped around his head, a bamboo plank in his hand, a white cloth wrapped around his waist, and some funny moves, belonged to the "Clown role". In 1955, flea dancers participated in the province's first Peer-review Performance of Folk Classical Music and Dance held in Hangzhou. They performed twice in the Provincial Great Hall of People, stood out of the 61 programs and won the first prize. From this period flea dance realized the transition from "men disguised as women" to "women on stage". Secondly, in terms of



the dancer quantity, flea dance has realized the evolution from "Clown-Dan dance" to "Group dance". In 1953, folk artists in Baiquan town of Dinghai District including Gao Shengxiang the father, Gao Ruxing the son and He Zhifu adapted "flea dance" into a group form. The traditional two-dancer funny performance of Jigong and God of Fire was expanded into a group performance. The dancing pair of male and female transformed into dancing groups of four, six and eight. On the one hand, this variation of personnel structure stems from the openness of gender concepts and women's claim of rights, enabling women to perform on the stage. The evolution of social, political and cultural environments also makes it possible for "women to step on stage". After the Liberation, the socialist cultural development has been unprecedentedly prosperous. Thanks to that, our flea dance has also changed the precedent of only performing at the religious processions and parades.....I did not hesitate in proposing the idea of "men and women performing together" and finally got support" [20]. On the other hand, the variation in the needs of social and cultural subjects leads to the increase of the performer quantity. The performance of the parade satisfies the public's desire to "watch", while the flea dance on the modern stage is demanded to satisfy the internal expressions of cultural subjects' joint participation and collective presentation, as a result, there is a realistic narrative of "group dance".

### 3.3.2 Action structure

The action structure of flea dance, whether in a duet or a group performance, is based on the "half-squat jump with big splayfooted gait" (similar to the Horse Gait in martial arts). The action difficulty of the male role has certainly increased. Based on the original jumping, walking and squatting, it is now integrated with hindering, lifting and picking, combined with shrugging shoulders, wiping faces, squeezing shoulders, winking eyes, throwing beads by the neck, rotating beads and stretching beads. Moreover, the action structure is added with "eight sets" of "throwing" beads by neck, clappers-playing in situ, inclined-angle clappers-playing, arched-head clappers-playing, foot-jumping clappers-playing, waist-folding clappers-playing, foot-jumping worship, and knocking wooden drum. Each set of actions would go around the four corners of the stage. The basic performance process is divided into appearance - static fighting - running around the stage- jumping feet and worshipping Buddha - fighting in four corners - martial fighting - throwing beads - ending. These have never been performed in the traditional flea dance but were created to meet the demands of modern performance and stage. The action of the female role is relatively simple and free with changes much less than the male role. It mainly shows the beautiful postures and flexible moves of women, but keeps spinning umbrellas and handkerchiefs. The innovated action structure has an intense fisherman style and "Buddhist" cultural connotation. On the one hand, Zhoushan is located on the islands and has made a living by fishing since ancient times. "While laboring on bumpy fishing boats for a long time, it was necessary to squat down and lower the gravity center to keep stability in the storm" [21]. This forms a series of actions with a low center of gravity. On the other hand, Zhoushan has been known as the "Buddhist heaven above the sea", which is not only the ashram of Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva but also maintains the belief in Arhats like "Jigong". Therefore, the action system includes the structures of "throwing beads" and "knocking wooden drum" with the cultural connotation of "Buddha".

### 3.3.3 Prop structure

Zhoushan gongs and drums were included in the first batch of the national protection lists of intangible cultural heritage in 2006 and became the first national protection project of intangible cultural heritage in Zhoushan City. "Only this impassioned gongs and drums can express the happiness of people on the beach after hard labor and deliver the joy of life. Its music is hot and rough, which corresponds to the vastness and violence of the sea, and makes the artistic abstraction of the sea scene" [22]. The integration of Zhoushan gong and drum with flea dance can strengthen the expression of artistic feelings, and promote the joint inheritance and symbiotic development of these two heritages. The musical characteristics of flea dance are mostly based on the thick, powerful and changeable drumbeats. Its music rhythm rises and floats from time to time, sometimes with "rough beating" being high and intense, and sometimes with "fine tapping" being light and delicate. Accompany instruments include drums, gongs, cymbals, small gongs, percussion instruments, Erhu, Sanxian, Suona, etc. Excerpts from its musical compendium are as Fig 1.

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Fig 1: The Musical Compendium

In addition, according to the female characteristics of God of Fire the female role, the shape of the flame is painted on the eyebrows, the narrow sleeve is changed into a water sleeve, and the handkerchief is changed into a color fan. Moreover, wine gourd, beads, wooden drum and broken fan are added to Jigong's dressing. Later, Jigong's broken fan is changed into a short stick made of colored silks in both hands, improving the character image to be more impressive and highlighting the flea dancers' efforts in the prop reform to satisfy the aesthetic standards of the modern stage.

## IV. CONCLUSIONS

Folk dance is an indispensable part of folk sports activities. "The dance produced to meet the physiological and psychological needs in form and function, belongs to the present definition of sports activities and constitutes a significant part of recreational sports in ancient China" [23]. In the early times of our country, the "deswelling dance" was invented to keep fit. The attribute of "flea dance" has been a complex of religious symbols, artistic performances, and folk sports. Although a series of modern changes have taken place and substantial efforts have been made to sustain vitality, the inheritance and development of flea dance are still far from enough. How to maximize its various attributes of fitness, art, cultural symbols and education remains the major objective in need of continuous contribution.

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