

Ancient Egyptian dances between past and present

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Abstract

The research aims to introduce the relation between the ancient Egyptian dances and movements, which recoded in life performance to be registered in tombs and temples inscriptions and the modern dances. The Dance for the ancient Egyptians was like life soul and the joy source, through help those doing physical movements with music rhythm inspiration them and change their mode into better condition. The Dance in ancient Egypt were vary between the funeral dances, dance for deities' satisfaction and dances for cure, all these dances types were beside the main dance purpose for enjoyment and feeling happiness was well known in ancient Egypt. These Ancient Egyptian dances movements, which well-known from prehistory periods in Egypt as offering for satisfy the deities, developed through centuries and become the icon of the dances, which most of modern civilization derived from it the dance arts movements and the way of making dances like (Ballet dances, Flamenco dances ...etc.).

Through this research paper will highlight the importance of riving the ancient Egyptian dances and the impact of this reviving into the local and international society from introduce the community reaction for some case studies like the Mummy Prada and the Festivals Road opining event in Luxor to know the community reaction for using this dances through another public events as reviving for one of the ancient Egyptian intangible heritage elements.

المخلص:

يهدف البحث إلى التعريف بالعلاقة بين الرقصات والحركات المصرية القديمة ، والتي أعيد ترميزها في الأداء الحياتي ليتم تسجيلها في نقوش المقابر والمعابد والرقصات الحديثة. كان الرقص عند قدماء المصريين بمثابة روح الحياة ومصدر الفرح. من خلال المساعدة ، أولئك الذين يقومون بحركات جسدية بإلهام إيقاع موسيقي ويغيرون وضعهم إلى حالة أفضل. كان الرقص في مصر القديمة يتنوع بين الرقصات الجنائزية ، والرقص لإرضاء الآلهة ، والرقصات للعلاج ، وكل هذه الأنواع كانت بجانب الغرض الرئيسي للرقص من أجل الاستمتاع والشعور بالسعادة وكان معروفًا في مصر القديمة. هذه الحركات الراقصة المصرية القديمة ، التي اشتهرت منذ عصور ما قبل التاريخ في مصر بأنها تقدم لإرضاء الآلهة ، تطورت عبر القرون وأصبحت أيقونة للرقصات ، والتي استمدت منها معظم الحضارات الحديثة حركات فنون الرقص وطريقة صنعها. رقصات مثل (رقصات البالية ، رقصات الفلامنكو ... الخ).

و من خلال هذه الورقة البحثية سوف نسلط الضوء على أهمية استخدام الرقصات المصرية القديمة داخل الاحتفالات العامة وتأثير ذلك في المجتمع المحلي والدولي من خلال تقديم رد فعل المجتمع لبعض دراسات الحالة مثل مومياء برادا وحدث افتتاح طريق المهرجانات في الأقصر لمعرفة رد فعل المجتمع لاستخدام هذه الرقصات من خلال أحداث عامة أخرى لإحياء أحد عناصر التراث المصرية القديمة غير الملموسة.

Introduction:

The ancient Egyptian dances history began from the prehistory period, this performance objective considering from many Egyptology scientists that the aim of it is designed for officials' festivals or idols satisfaction (Irena 1995). This point view case shown in the Naqada dancer or from presynaptic period from many Egyptology scientists like Irena Lakzofa (fig.1)



Figure. 1 Naqada Dancer from pre-dynastic Naqada II period

The represent of the ancient Egyptian dances in early dynastic period in some of kings' festivals Inscriptions like king Scorpion mace head, which depicting in one of the kings' official events festival dancers (fig.2).

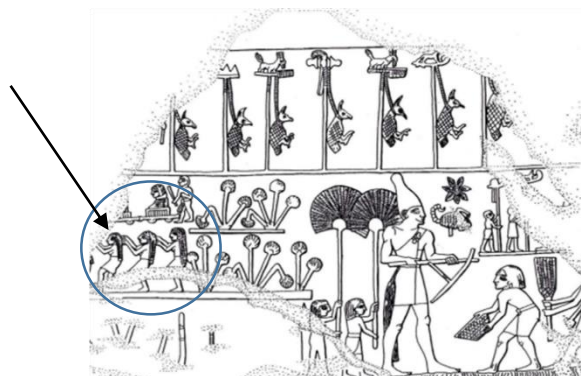


Figure. 2 Festival Dancers in king scorpion mace head



This performance inscription agrees with the point view value of dedicating ancient Egyptian dances for religious or official's events. However, there is many other aims from dances performances in ancient Egypt is reviving for one of ancient Egyptian intangible heritage elements represent the local Egyptian community identity.

Research Importance:

The Ancient Egyptian dances effect in our modern life today as a form of the intangible heritage of ancient Egypt. The modern festivals in archaeological and antiquities field today contains many of the modern dances, which inherited its movements from ancient Egyptian dances which recorded from ancient tombs and temples wall painting and inscriptions. The cases of the Egyptian events of Mummy Prada and Festivals Road in 2021, which used the ancient Egyptian dances designs for represent the ancient Egyptian dances heritage was considering as a great step in reviving one of the ancient Egyptian intangible heritage elements through performance in events and festivals.

The great efforts from the Ministries and governments to perform this events with dances designed from ancient Egypt reflect the importance of reviving this veiled intangible heritage element in local and international community as a part of the Egyptian community heritage identity.

Research Objectives:

- 1- Reviving the Ancient Egyptian dances as one of the Egyptian intangible heritage types.
- 2- Many of the Egyptian people not from the specialists think that ancient Egyptian dances was only for the funeral ritualsand that is was not correct, there is many of the Egyptian folklore dances and also movements derived from the Ancient Egyptian dances like [El – Tahitib Dance].
- 3- mixing the knowledge which introduce in the visit including many information with joy and entertainment.
- 4- Knowing about the ancient Egyptian dances which transfer to represent a type for Egyptian Intangible Heritage (understanding).
- 5- Knowing about dances kinds and its purpose and development.
- 6- Clear the main conception about ancient Egyptian Dance and its roles in ancient Egypt that it was known from prehistory as one of the offering methods for satisfy deities and Healing purpose.

Research Problem:

- The wrong concepts about the main idea of using the ancient Egyptian dance for idols satisfaction and festivals, although many of the modern dances improve its main movements from it as a part of the civilizations arts development.
- The ancient Egyptian dances, as one of the intangible heritage elements need to have more efforts for raise awareness about its heritage importance to be as a step for using it as one of the Egyptian heritage traditions, which still continue from past to now.
- Unregister for many of the wall temples and tombs, which represent the ancient Egyptian dances developing as one of the intangible heritage elements.
- Low of research bibliography and prewise studies, which deal with the research subject, case studies and its effects on the local and international community from the tourism and the economical side.

The Research Methodology:

The qualitative and quantitative research methods:

The research depending on the quantitative and qualitative method, the qualitative method depended on the literature review from previous studies about the research subject, academic books and journal, which deal with the research problem. The quantitative method depended on short survey from three questions with Arabic language for random samples (6 persons) from the Egyptian citizens in order to have knowledge about the local community interests with this intangible heritage element, and have more knowledge about some unclear

weakness points for enhance solving the research problems. The samples age varies between 20 – 40 year from Egyptian people who can realize the difference between the ancient Egyptian dances and other modern dance kinds, also to give suitable recommendations enhance the preserving methods for this intangible heritage element.

The questions were in Arabic language, first one was (are you follow or see the Mummy Prada festival?)

The answer for all of the samples were Yes.

The second question are you enjoyed with the ancient Egyptian dances, which including this events?

The answers were yes for all of the samples (fig. 3).



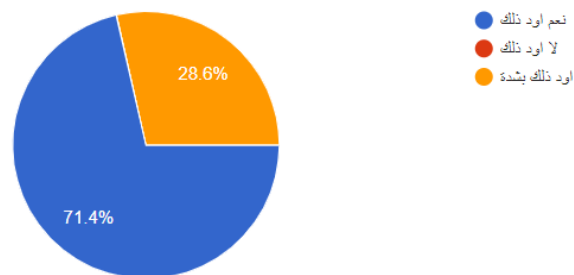
Figure 3: the questioner and the random sample answers

The last question discussed the agree and refuse of using dances inspired from the ancient Egyptian dances in most of the recent Egyptian events?

The answer of the samples was 71.4 % answer with (Yes), and 28.6% answer with (No), which reflect that the majority of them want to revive this dances (fig.4).

ما رأيك هل توافق على ان يتم الأستعانة في اغلب الأحتفالات المصرية حالياً برقصات مستوحاه من مصر القديمة

7 responses



Ancient Egyptian Dances in the Past:

The dances performance in the ancient Egyptian life was so familiar to the local community, these dances kinds the ancient Egyptian care to represent its performance with words and inscriptions together, for instance with inscriptions which represent the ancient Egyptian dances kinds in events from the prehistorical period in caves paintings dances for celebrate the power of facing and hunting the wild animals or for satisfy this wild animal , then in the pre-

dynastic period as mentioned before in the research introduction¹. Then in the old kingdom period tombs wall inscriptions in many of the old kingdom period tombs areas for various purposes for instance satisfy the idol Hathor the idol of motherhood, joy and music, which transfer her form into the idol Sekhmet the idol of music and dance in the other world who stand in the entrance of the other world way to receive the dead and help him in the resurrection , in this case we can see the dancers dance holding drums beats in it as rejoicing and welcome with the idol Sekhmet (Carloyn 2019), for example fourteen dancers in the tomb of the vizier Kagemni (osirisnet.net 1982) ,which represented on the , who was king's Titi vizier in the 6th dynasty give us feedback about another dance kind it was the Acrobatic dance, which can be smiler to modern Acrobatic dances now in our time, the dancers movements represent their bodies are bent backwards, almost horizontally, while both of their arms and a leg are nearly vertical. These movements if it compared with other modern Acrobatic and Ballet dances we can observe the dance design and the dancers' movements similarity between the two kinds, also the purpose of these kinds, many of it was for low sadness temper and give happiness feels(2021 مجلة الأفاق الألكترونية) (fig3,4,5).



Figure 4: Kagemni tomb Dancers from 6 dynasty ,osirisnet.net 1982.

¹ Naqada Dancer in Brooklyn Museum and king scorpion mace head inscriptions, p.3.



Figure 5: The modern Acrobatic Dance compering with the ancient Egyptian Acrobatic dance in the 6th dynasty (مجلة الأفاق)

(الالكترونية 2021)



Figure 6: figure representing the modern dance - Ballet Dancer shape , compering with the ancient Egyptian dance in Kagemni tomb

The Ancient Egyptian Acrobatic dances improve its movements through the dynastic periods, in the Middle Kingdom we can observe the evolution of the dances movements, this evolution was considering as empower function for the military exercises as show below for an example the noble (Inti) from Deshasha tombs- Beni Hassan (El-Meina_now) in the Middle kingdom era the soldiers training with dance movements vary between the clapping, raising legs and

hands, holding symbols idol of Meret the dance goddess, Isis and Hathor symbols, dancing and holding incense jar (fig.6).

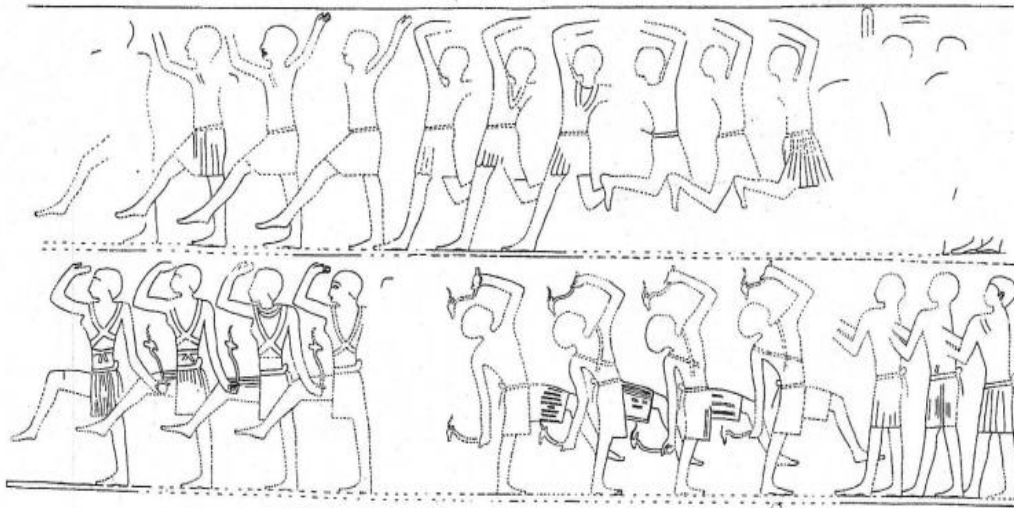


Figure 7: Dancers from INTi tomb - Middle kingdom era (Mark 2017)

Also using hands with clapping or using hand fingers rub for sharing in the music rhythm through dance performance considering from the dances movements kinds (fig.7).



Figure 8: Intef-Iker tomb from Thebes -senwosert I region, dance with clapping hands and using fingers rub (Donald 2001).

In the New kingdom era for instance, the Opet festival had a special design for the Acrobatic dance, this dance registered on the Luxor temple walls and represent on some ostraca from the same province (Luxor, Deir-El Medina) by some local artists love to register the dancer movement, accessories and clothes colours (Mark 2017) (fig 8).



Figure 9: Ostraca represent dancer movement -from Deir El Medina (Mark 2017)

Hathor idol dancers continue their role in introducing the dances which satisfy her, the dancers included their movement with the Egyptian Sistrum and the minit neckless offering (fig9,10).

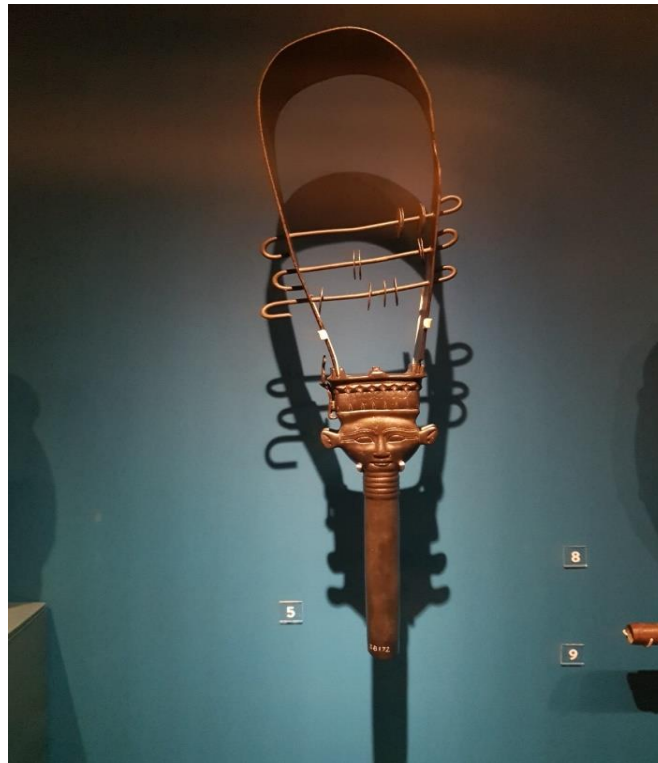


Figure 10: Hathor Bronze Sistrum, Late Period , used by dancers for Hathor satisfaction (Mark 2017)



Figure 11: Meint neckless, used by Hathor dancers as offering for Hathor satisfaction (Mark 2017)

There were many other idols participate in dance movement inspiration like Merit or Meret in the Egyptian Mythology, Merit is representing with Ra or Atum along with Heka at the Egyptian idol magic, at the beginning of creation and helps establish order through music (Mark 2017), then naturally along with the music the dance movement inspired with the rhythm.

Also Bes the idol of joy in ancient Egyptian mythology was responsible for dancing with tambourine in festivals and events to spared happiness and repel the evil spirits plus its vital role as protector for the mother and child during childbirth (Patricia 2003)(fig.11).



Figure 12: Bes , the idol of joy Playing and dance with a tambourine (Patricia 2003)

Also there were many hieroglyphic vocabularies represent the verb of dance like *ib3* (Patricia 2003), which mean to dance. Dances training sessions were available for both women and men from all ages even if they were dance together or alone, this was available for all dances kinds for example (Lyrics Dance, Acrobatic Dance, Funeral Dance, Religious Dance, Dramatic Dance, The Dancing with a Stick or (El Tahitib) , Gymnastic Dance, ...etc.) (Mark 2017).

In the Greek period, the dances designs changed to be suitable more for the dramatic theatres, who transfer stories of the ancient Egyptian mythology to the public in night events and festivals.



Conclusion

The ancient Egyptian dances considering one of the rich resources for the tangible and intangible heritage, its wittiness on one of the favourite arts for the Egyptian in the past and also in present by revive its movements in the special events, which related to heritage and archaeological festivals or even in the Egyptian ceremonies for show and represent the Egyptian identity.

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