

DANCE ART AS A SYMBOL OF NATIONAL IDENTITY AND HISTORICAL
MEMORY

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Abstract. This article analyzes the role of dance art in preserving national identity and historical memory. Dance is not only a form of aesthetic expression but also a type of intangible cultural heritage that artistically conveys a people's socio-historical experience, traditions, beliefs, and values. Through Uzbek folk dances, historical memory, national identity, and cultural layers are preserved through movements, images, and rhythms. The article also highlights the educational, aesthetic, and intergenerational continuity functions of dance. It analyzes how national dance motifs are reinterpreted in contemporary choreography to instill historical and aesthetic codes into the consciousness of today's youth.

Keywords: national identity, historical memory, dance art, intangible cultural heritage, Uzbek folk dances, cultural identity, aesthetic expression, generational continuity, choreography, folklore.

Every nation's unique culture and art are closely connected with its historical development, worldview, lifestyle, and values. In this regard, dance art is not merely a set of aesthetic movements but an artistic expression of a nation's spiritual state, aspirations, beliefs, and historical experiences. Uzbek dance has evolved over thousands of years, becoming a powerful means of expressing the spiritual world of the people. In the current era of globalization, studying dance as a factor in preserving national identity and transmitting historical memory to future generations is an urgent socio-scientific task.

Dance Art and Historical Memory: The Anthropological Roots of Art. As one of the oldest art forms in human history, dance originally performed ritualistic and spiritual-magical functions. In ancient societies, it was part of fertility, war, marriage, and deity-worship rituals. These aspects show that dance preserves the historical memory of human-society relations.

Ancient mentalities and archetypal symbols are also preserved in Uzbek folk dances. For instance, the "Lazgi" dance includes Zoroastrian-era symbols of fire, solar movements, and full moon imagery expressed through movement. Such imagery provides a basis to interpret dance not merely as physical movement, but as an artistic reflection of a people's historical consciousness and worldview.

Furthermore, Uzbek dance reflects the socio-spiritual conditions from ancient Bactria, Sogdiana, Khorezmshahs, and the Timurid period, to the colonial and independence eras in artistic form.

The Symbolic Function of Dance in Forming National Identity. National identity begins with understanding one's own history and deeply perceiving one's customs and values. Dance plays a key role in this process as a carrier of important cultural information. Movements, musical rhythm, costumes, and stage performance in dance vividly reflect a people's physical, spiritual, and aesthetic characteristics.

For example, "Andijon Polka" and "Fergana Dances" express delicacy and tranquility; "Bukhara Dances" are characterized by refined mimicry and stage poise; while "Khorezm Dances" are known for energy, impulsiveness, and expressiveness. These features reflect the socio-cultural psychology of each region and reveal the regional manifestations of national identity.

Each dance that encapsulates elements of national identity serves as a means of preserving, reviving, and strengthening cultural heritage. In today's context, these functions hold special significance.

Dance Art and Cultural-Spiritual Continuity: Intergenerational Heritage. Dances are usually passed down orally — from master to apprentice, from generation to generation. This continuity ensures the artistic, aesthetic, and emotional preservation of memory. The master-apprentice tradition in dance guarantees the transmission not only of technical skill but also of inner philosophy, national spirit, and values.

For example, renowned dancers like Mukarrama Turgunboyeva, Tamara Khanum, and Gavhar Matyaqubova established their own schools. These artists not only preserved the national dance heritage but also developed it into a stage art, contributing to the aesthetic consciousness and historical memory of the people.

Through this art form, youth learn not only dance but also history, culture, morality, and the aesthetics of art. This demonstrates that dance is a multifaceted tool with educational, didactic, psychological, and aesthetic value.

Contemporary Choreography and the Harmony of Historical-Aesthetic Codes. Today, stage interpretations and modern forms of national dances are widely used in choreography. This approach attracts youth while ensuring the preservation of historical-aesthetic codes.

For instance, historical figures (such as bards, princesses, warriors, and farmers) are artistically revived through folklore-ethnographic ensembles, dance theater performances, and choreographic compositions. Such stage works serve as both memory theaters and educational platforms.

Documenting dance as cultural heritage through video recordings, digital platforms, catalogs, and interactive applications — and presenting them to youth — contributes to aligning historical heritage with contemporary realities.

Conclusion. As an integral part of the people's life, dance art expresses national identity and serves as a powerful means of transmitting historical memory to future generations. Every nation's dances embody unique historical experiences, cultural layers, and spiritual heritage. Therefore, dance should be valued not only as artistic creativity but also as a historical document of the national spirit — to be studied scientifically and instilled deeply in youth consciousness. Indeed, national dances are a bridge between history and the present.

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