

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Dissertation title: Tuồng Choreography from a Semiotic Perspective

Field of study: Theatre Theory and History

Code: 9.21.02.21

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ABSTRACT CONTENT

1. Research objectives and research subjects

The specific research objectives of the dissertation are:

- To study Tuồng choreography from the perspective of a scientific discipline - semiotics - based on established and verified theoretical foundations, thereby providing an additional scientific perspective on the broad and profound layers of meaning embedded in Tuồng choreography within the performing art of Tuồng.
- To analyze the system of Tuồng character models and Tuồng choreographic models used by Tuồng performers when portraying roles in traditional Tuồng plays from a semiotic perspective, in order to identify the meanings of the signs involved in Tuồng choreography and their indispensable contribution to the performing art of Tuồng.

The research subjects of the dissertation are:

- Tuồng choreography: the historical formation of Tuồng art in general and Tuồng choreography in particular; Tuồng choreographic models with a system of representative and characteristic movement patterns and actions that help performers portray Tuồng roles and construct character models on the Tuồng stage.
- Semiotics: issues in semiotics and the theoretical foundations of semiotics adopted by the doctoral candidate for the study.
- Tuồng choreography from a semiotic perspective: codes of choreographic movement and cultural codes in traditional Tuồng stage performances; the choreographic movements of Tuồng character models examined through F. de Saussure's semiotic perspective of the signifier (form) and the signified (content) in Tuồng choreographic models used to construct traditional Tuồng character models; C. S. Peirce's triadic theory; and Umberto Eco's theory of reception codes.

2. Research methods used

- Analysis-synthesis method: analyzing specific Tuồng stage performances and the systems of choreographic movements used in Tuồng performance from a semiotic perspective, thereby examining and demonstrating the signs created and their contribution to the performer's process of acting on the Tuồng stage.
- Systematic-comparative method: each traditional Tuồng play contains different character models. Each character model has a different performance convention, emotional state, and

choreographic element. Therefore, from the perspective of semiotic science, the doctoral candidate adopts a systematic approach and compares Tuồng choreographic signs with the meanings they generate in order to construct Tuồng character models in traditional Tuồng plays.

- Interdisciplinary method: the study applies an interdisciplinary approach by placing Tuồng choreography within a semiotic perspective in order to expand its multilayered cultural, social, aesthetic, and performance-technique meanings. Accordingly, the doctoral candidate employs interdisciplinary research to illuminate the scholarly issues discussed in the dissertation.

- The interdisciplinary approach is also applied by placing the signs of Tuồng choreographic movements in an organic and indispensable relationship with cultural issues (cultural codes) and with the distinctive language of Tuồng performance art (Tuồng theatrical codes). This contributes to a broader interpretation of the signs embodied in Tuồng choreographic movements, as well as the shared codes between performers and recipients of those choreographic signs.

- Expert interview method: the doctoral candidate conducts interviews with experts, researchers, Tuồng performing artists, and domestic semiotics researchers to investigate issues related to the dissertation.

3. Main findings and conclusions

The dissertation "Tuồng Choreography from a Semiotic Perspective" applies the theoretical foundations of semiotics to study and decode the system of Tuồng choreography associated with several character models in traditional Tuồng performance art. The principal research findings may be summarized as follows:

Tuồng choreography constitutes a distinctive system of sign language in which each choreographic movement not only carries an aesthetic expressive meaning but also contains social and cultural layers of meaning.

From an integrated semiotic perspective drawing on the theories of three leading semioticians: Saussure - choreography is analyzed as a relationship between the signifier (movement) and the signified (meaning); Peirce - choreography fully manifests the triadic structure of representamen - object - interpretant, helping explain the mechanisms through which Tuồng audiences receive and decode signs, thereby fostering understanding and appreciation of Tuồng among younger audiences today; Eco - Tuồng choreography encompasses the codes of Tuồng performance art as well as cultural and aesthetic codes, allowing for an in-depth analysis of the meanings embedded in layers of representative choreographic movements within traditional Tuồng character models. The dissertation also presents an encoding and decoding table for several choreographic movements of representative character models, from which it discusses their application to the preservation, promotion, and development of the valuable heritage of Tuồng art.

Tuồng choreography exists within the semiosphere of Vietnamese culture and becomes a cultural code reflecting ethical conceptions, aesthetic thought, and national identity during a historical period regarded as the golden age of Tuồng theatre. Studying Tuồng choreography from a semiotic perspective opens up for audiences multiple layers of meaning and values related to Vietnamese traditional culture, aesthetics, and ethics. It also creates a direction for future studies on the signs of all components of Tuồng performance art, such as singing and stylized spoken delivery, in order to reveal the broader values of Tuồng performance as a whole rather than choreography alone when it is situated within the semiosphere system proposed by the cultural, literary, and semiotic scholar Yuri Lotman. This is also one of the dissertation's open-ended conclusions that the doctoral candidate intends to address in future research.

The encoding and decoding table of Tuồng choreography for several representative character models shows that the system of representative Tuồng choreographic movements can be studied more extensively, standardized, and developed into a tool for teaching, research, and the preservation of traditional Tuồng art. The dissertation's findings open up a new approach to the study of Vietnamese Tuồng theatre.

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