

From Ritual Dance -- After Dr. Yvonne's Lecture

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Dr. Yvonne gave a lecture on her research about ritual dance on April 10th. According to her study, the dancing body in ritual dance represents ideas, feelings, understanding and knowledge. She compares it to praise, with the power to heal the world, to give strength, to praise each individual, to protect, and to share. Some video clips were also showed as a demonstration. However, the dances in the clips failed to convince me of such claims. It is apparent that ritual dance concretizes some abstract concept, making it easier for the audience to accept. For instance, the dancer of Oya (the divinity of wind) imitates the movements of breeze or tornado, while the movements of the dancer of Shango (the divinity of fire) resemble flame. I also agree that dance could serve as a body language; the Hawaiian hola dance is a good example. Those types of dance share some functionality with languages. However, I do not see any essential differences between folk dance and ritual dance. In my opinion, the claim that ritual dance has “super power” is somewhat far-fetched. If indeed such “super power” does exist, it comes from the religion, not the dance itself.