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## **A Study of the Distribution and Characteristics of “Hashigo-Jishi” Ladder Lion Dance in the Japanese Archipelago**

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This paper aims to clarify the actual transmission of acrobatic lion and tiger dances performed using ladders, referred to here as “ladder lion dances,” throughout the Japanese archipelago through fieldwork and other methods. It also analyzes the geographical characteristics of traditional sites and the differences in ladder lion dances across various regions while examining the dissemination of this performing art.

Previous studies by folk performing arts researchers have focused on individual traditional sites of ladder lion dances. However, there has been no comprehensive research on the transmission situation nationwide, including how many ladder lion dances have been transmitted in each region, and clarifying the geographical characteristics of traditional sites in Japan.

This paper first identifies existing ladder lion dances and sites where the tradition has been interrupted or lost through literature surveys and fieldwork. The author’s investigation revealed that as of 2019, there were 33 existing ladder lion dances, and that there had been 25 traditional sites where ladder lion dances had been performed in the past.

Furthermore, through this survey, it was confirmed that traditional sites for ladder lion dances exhibit distinctive distribution patterns. While they are widely distributed from the Tohoku region to Kyushu, they are primarily transmitted along the coastlines of the Pacific Ocean, Seto Inland Sea, and the Kii Channel and their surroundings, with no transmission observed on the Sea of Japan side. It was also noted that multiple areas with concentrated traditional sites (ladder lion dance traditional zones) can be identified, and the forms of ladders used vary from region to region, with differences based on traditional zones, categorizable into four types.

Considering the geographical features of traditional sites, the paper proposes a tentative discussion suggesting that ladder lion dances were likely disseminated extensively due to maritime activities from the early modern period to modern times and states the necessity of examining historical materials.

Key words: “Hashigo-Jishi” Ladder Lion Dance, distribution and propagation, “Hashigo-Toramai”, heritage area, the characteristics of folk performing arts

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