

Research on the Classification, Characteristics and Value of Traditional Chinese Ethnic Sports

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ABSTRACT: In today's world swept by the tide of globalization, diverse cultures collide and integrate with each other, and all countries are faced with the important task of safeguarding ethnic solidarity and cultural inheritance. As a multi-ethnic community with a long history and splendid culture, the Chinese nation has nurtured a rich and diverse array of outstanding traditional cultures with unique characteristics in its long-term development process, among which Traditional Chinese Ethnic Sports is a shining pearl. This study adopts the literature review method and field investigation method to conduct structured research, classifies Traditional Chinese Ethnic Sports, summarizes its characteristics and values, and provides references for the protection and inheritance of ethnic cultures around the world.

KEYWORDS: Traditional Chinese Ethnic Sports; Classification; Characteristics; Value; Inheritance of Ethnic Culture

I. INTRODUCTION

China is a unified multi-ethnic country composed of 56 ethnic groups. Traditional Chinese Ethnic Sports is a cultural treasure created by the people of all ethnic groups with their collective wisdom in practice, carrying the spiritual strength of the nation. The origin of Traditional Chinese Ethnic Sports can be traced back to activities such as productive labor, military campaigns, and sacrificial ceremonies carried out by ancient humans for survival and reproduction. In the process of struggling against nature and pursuing a better life, various ethnic groups gradually formed unique forms of physical activities and skills. With the progress of society and the development of human civilization, these activities gradually evolved into sports forms that combine entertainment, competitiveness, cultural connotation and were inherited and developed among various ethnic groups, becoming the prototype of Traditional Chinese Ethnic Sports. During the long course of development, these traditional sports have also embodied the unique temperament of Chinese culture. The inheritance and development of Traditional Chinese Ethnic Sports require the joint efforts of schools and society, and the exploration of its classification, characteristics and values is a prerequisite for achieving this goal.

II. METHOD

This study adopted the literature review method to systematically sort out existing research results, laying a foundation for subsequent research. Meanwhile, the field investigation method was applied to conduct visits and surveys in ethnic minority areas and areas where Traditional Chinese Ethnic Sports are well-developed; during the 12th National Ethnic Minority Sports Games held in Sanya City, Hainan Province, China in 2024, the author conducted research on the organizing units and coaches of various Traditional Chinese Ethnic Sports events, obtaining a large amount of survey data.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Classification of Traditional Chinese Ethnic Sports

1) Classification by Sports Form

Competitive Sports: Mainly include various confrontational, speed-based and skill-based sports events, such as Wushu (martial arts), wrestling, horse racing, dragon boat racing, archery, and Cuju (ancient Chinese football). These events usually have clear competition rules and criteria for winning and losing, emphasizing the competition and demonstration of participants' strength, speed, skills, wisdom and other aspects. They have strong ornamental and competitive nature, occupy an important position in Traditional Chinese Ethnic Sports, and are important carriers for demonstrating national spirit and cultural characteristics.

Game-based Sports: Encompassing diverse, content-rich games with simple rules—including rope skipping, shuttlecock kicking, the traditional group game "Eagle Catches Chicks," and ethnic board games—these focus on entertainment and leisure. Appealing to broad participation unbound by age, gender, or venue, they boast strong appeal and interactivity, key in preserving ethnic culture, fostering social bonds, and nurturing cultural identity.

Fitness and Health-preserving Sports: Sports events that aim at strengthening the body, regulating the mind and prolonging life, integrating traditional health-preserving concepts and methods such as Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) health preservation, Qigong, and Tai Chi. Examples include Tai Chi, Baduanjin (Eight-Section Brocade), Wuqinxi (Five-Animal Frolics), and health Qigong. These events focus on the unity of body and mind, and the cultivation of both internal and external qualities. They emphasize achieving the effects of dredging meridians, balancing Qi and blood, enhancing physical fitness and improving immunity through soft, slow and coherent body movements and breathing regulation. They embody the traditional health-preserving wisdom, health concepts of the Chinese nation and are increasingly loved and advocated by more people in modern society.

Performance-based Sports: Sports with strong ornamental and artistic expression, usually performed in various ethnic festivals, celebrations, sacrificial ceremonies and other occasions, such as dragon dancing, lion dancing, stilt walking, dragon lantern performance, and Guozhuang Dance of the Tibetan people. These events integrate multiple artistic elements such as music, dance, acrobatics and costumes. With their unique artistic charm and cultural connotation, they attract audiences, demonstrate the historical culture, folk customs and aesthetic tastes of various ethnic groups, and are important components of ethnic cultural art. They are of great significance for inheriting and promoting ethnic culture and enhancing ethnic cohesion.

2) Classification by Cultural Connotation

Sports Related to Ethnic Origin and Historical Legends: These events often originate from ethnic creation myths, ancestor legends, heroic epics, etc., carrying the historical memories and cultural genes of the ethnic group, and reflecting important historical events and processes such as the origin, migration and development of the ethnic group. For example, the traditional sports of the Mongolian people, such as horse racing and wrestling, are said to be closely related to the origin of the Mongolian ethnic group and ancient nomadic life. They are a cultural tradition and spiritual symbol formed by the Mongolian people in their long-term grassland life, embodying the brave, bold and tenacious national character of the Mongolian people and their admiration for freedom and strength.

Sports Related to Religious Beliefs and Sacrificial Activities: Religious beliefs hold an important position in many ethnic groups, and some sports activities are important parts of religious rituals, sacrificial activities or are deeply influenced by religious beliefs. For example, religious pilgrimage activities of the Tibetan people, such as circumambulating mountains and lakes, although not strictly competitive sports, the elements contained in them such as physical practice, patience and perseverance are inherently consistent with the spirit of sports; in addition, dances, acrobatics and other performances in sacrificial rituals of some ethnic minorities not only represent worship and prayer to gods, but also have certain physical exercise and entertainment functions, reflecting the in-depth integration of religious culture and sports culture.

Sports Related to Productive Labor and Lifestyle: These sports events are created by ethnic groups in long-term productive labor

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and social practice to adapt to the natural environment, improve production efficiency and enrich life content, and are closely related to the production methods, economic forms and living environments of the ethnic group. For example, the dragon boat racing of the Han people originated from the ancient dragon totem worship and water-based production and living customs and is a product of the combination of agricultural culture and sports activities; another example is the seesaw and swing of the Korean Chinese, which are related to the leisure activities of the Korean Chinese during slack farming seasons and the living customs of women. They reflect the pursuit and love of the Korean Chinese for a better life in their spare time after labor, and at the same time reflect the folk customs and cultural characteristics of the Korean Chinese.

B. Characteristics of Traditional Chinese Ethnic Sports

1) Ethnicity

Traditional Chinese Ethnic Sports are deeply rooted in the historical and cultural soil of various ethnic groups, and are an organic part of ethnic culture, with distinct ethnic characteristics and regional features. Each ethnic group's traditional sports events contain the unique cultural connotation, values, aesthetic tastes and spiritual pursuit of that ethnic group, reflecting the ethnic group's character, customs and lifestyle. For example, the Peacock Dance of the Dai people, with its graceful postures and stretching movements, imitates various movements and expressions of peacocks, fully demonstrating the Dai people's pursuit of beauty and love for life, as well as the influence of Dai Buddhist culture and their aspiration for auspiciousness and happiness; another example is the Sanam Dance of the Uyghur people, which has a lively rhythm and passionate movements. Accompanied by beautiful Uyghur music, dancers express the bold, cheerful and optimistic national character of the Uyghur people and their praise for a better life through movements such as twisting the neck, clapping hands and stamping feet. It has a strong ethnic style and regional characteristics and is an important symbol of Uyghur culture.

2) Regionality

The emergence and development of Traditional Chinese Ethnic Sports are deeply influenced by the geographical environment and natural conditions, and Traditional Chinese Ethnic Sports in different regions often have different regional characteristics and adaptability. For example, the traditional sports of the Mongolian people in the northern grassland areas of China are mainly horse racing, wrestling and archery. These events are adapted to the geographical environment of vast grasslands and developed animal husbandry, as well as the nomadic lifestyle, embodying the rough, bold and brave character of the northern ethnic groups; while the traditional sports of the Han people in the southern water town areas are mainly dragon boat racing, dragon dancing and lion dancing, which are closely related to the geographical environment of developed water systems and frequent boat transportation in the south, as well as the agricultural culture, demonstrating the delicate, dexterous and cooperative spiritual outlook of the southern ethnic groups. In addition, traditional sports of some mountain ethnic groups, such as mountain climbing, rock climbing and swing, are consistent with the complex terrain of mountainous areas and the needs of life and production, reflecting the ethnic groups' adaptation and utilization of the natural environment, as well as the indomitable willpower honed in harsh environments.

3) Mass Participation

Traditional Chinese Ethnic Sports originate from the productive labor and life practice of the broad masses of people and have a broad mass foundation and participation. Their content is rich and diverse, their forms are flexible, and their rules are simple and easy to follow, without restrictions on age, gender, occupation, venue and other factors, and can meet the fitness and entertainment needs of different groups of people. Whether it is highly competitive sports such as Wushu and wrestling, interesting game-based sports, or fitness and health-preserving sports such as Tai Chi and Baduanjin, they all have a large number of participants and inheritors among the people. In ethnic gathering areas, Traditional Chinese Ethnic Sports activities are often grand events participated in by all villagers. During important occasions such as the Spring Festival and ethnic festivals, people of all ages and

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both genders participate together, enjoying the happiness and unity brought by sports. They have become an important link for condensing ethnic feelings and inheriting ethnic culture and play a positive role in promoting ethnic solidarity and social harmony and stability.

4) Inheritability

As an important carrier of ethnic culture, Traditional Chinese Ethnic Sports have strong inheritability and historical continuity. They are passed down from generation to generation and continue to develop within the ethnic group, becoming one of the important ways for ethnic culture inheritance. The inheritance methods of Traditional Chinese Ethnic Sports mainly include family inheritance, master-apprentice inheritance, community inheritance and school inheritance. In family inheritance, elders pass on the traditional sports skills and knowledge of their ethnic group to their descendants, making them part of the family culture; master-apprentice inheritance involves passing on some unique sports skills and tricks through the way of apprenticeship. For example, various schools and styles of Wushu are mostly preserved and developed through verbal instruction and practical demonstration between masters and apprentices; community inheritance is reflected in various traditional sports activities and festival celebrations in ethnic gathering areas, where community members are imperceptibly influenced and educated by Traditional Chinese Ethnic Sports culture in the process of participating in activities; school inheritance is a product of the combination of the modern education system and Traditional Chinese Ethnic Sports. By offering Traditional Chinese Ethnic Sports courses and carrying out Traditional Chinese Ethnic Sports activities in schools, Traditional Chinese Ethnic Sports are incorporated into the formal education system, cultivating the recognition and interest of the new generation in Traditional Chinese Ethnic Sports, injecting new vitality into the inheritance and development of Traditional Chinese Ethnic Sports, and ensuring their continuation and promotion in modern society.

C. Value of Traditional Chinese Ethnic Sports

1) Cultural Value

Traditional Chinese Ethnic Sports are an important part of the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation, containing rich historical and cultural connotations and national spiritual elements, and are important carriers for inheriting and promoting ethnic culture. They carry cultural information such as the historical memories, folk customs, values and aesthetic tastes of various ethnic groups. Through the inheritance and development of traditional sports events, ethnic culture can be continued and spread, the cultural identity and sense of belonging of the ethnic group can be enhanced, the exchange and integration between different ethnic cultures can be promoted, and the cultural treasure house of the Chinese nation can be enriched and prospered. For example, the Wushu culture of China not only includes a large number of offensive and defensive skills and routine performances, but also contains profound philosophical thoughts, moral concepts and martial ethics. Thoughts such as Confucianism's "benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and trust" and Taoism's "following the laws of nature" and "the unity of man and nature" are all reflected in Wushu. Through the inheritance and promotion of Wushu, these excellent traditional cultural concepts are also spread around the world, becoming one of the important windows for the world to understand Chinese culture.

2) Fitness Value

Most Traditional Chinese Ethnic Sports events are gradually formed in long-term productive labor and life practice, and their movement methods and approaches conform to the physiological and psychological characteristics of the human body, with unique fitness effects. Whether it is intense competitive events such as wrestling and horse racing, or gentle fitness and health-preserving events such as Tai Chi and health Qigong, they can effectively exercise the physical quality of participants, enhance muscle strength, joint flexibility, cardiopulmonary function, balance ability, etc., improve the coordination, flexibility and endurance of the body, and promote physical health. Moreover, Traditional Chinese Ethnic Sports focus on the unity of body and mind. While exercising the body, they can also regulate emotions, relieve stress, and cultivate the willpower and psychological quality of participants, which is

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of great significance for improving people's quality of life and physical and mental health. For example, long-term practice of Tai Chi can improve blood circulation in the human body, enhance the function of the immune system, prevent and treat some chronic diseases, and at the same time cultivate people's patience, concentration and calm character, achieving the effect of cultivating both body and mind.

3) Educational Value

Traditional Chinese Ethnic Sports contain rich educational resources and have important educational significance. They can cultivate people's team spirit, competitive awareness, sense of rules, willpower and patriotic feelings. In competitive Traditional Chinese Ethnic Sports events, participants need to cooperate closely with their teammates, fight together for the honor of the team, thereby cultivating team spirit and collective sense of honor; at the same time, competitions emphasize fair competition, respect for opponents and abiding by rules, which helps to cultivate participants' sense of rules and good sports ethics. In addition, many Traditional Chinese Ethnic Sports events carry the historical memories and heroic legends of the ethnic group. Through understanding and participating in these events, people's national pride and patriotic enthusiasm can be aroused, the cohesion and centripetal force of the nation can be enhanced, and participants can be imperceptibly educated in patriotism and influenced by national spirit. For example, Mongolian traditional sports events that tell ancient heroic stories, such as Gereltu Wrestling, constantly inspire the Mongolian people to inherit the heroic spirit and cultivate the qualities of bravery, tenacity and perseverance in the process of inheritance, which plays an important role in cultivating the national pride and sense of responsibility of the new generation of Mongolian youth.

4) Economic Value

With the continuous development and promotion of Traditional Chinese Ethnic Sports, their economic value has gradually become prominent. On the one hand, the holding of Traditional Chinese Ethnic Sports events can drive the coordinated development of related industries, such as sports goods manufacturing, tourism services, catering and accommodation, and cultural entertainment, creating new growth points for local economic development. For example, the annual international dragon boat races attract a large number of domestic and foreign tourists to watch the races, which not only promotes the prosperity of the local tourism market, but also drives the economic development of surrounding areas, and at the same time promotes the rise and development of related industries such as dragon boat equipment manufacturing and dragon boat training. On the other hand, some characteristic Traditional Chinese Ethnic Sports events and skills can be developed and utilized through market-oriented operations. For example, integrating elements of Traditional Chinese Ethnic Sports into cultural and creative products, sports fitness equipment and tourism project design, creating products and services with ethnic characteristics and market competitiveness, providing strong support for the economic revitalization and poverty alleviation of ethnic areas, and promoting the sustainable economic and social development of ethnic areas.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The culture of Traditional Chinese Ethnic Sports is nurtured through the long-term labor and life practice of the people, has a broad mass foundation, and is a treasure of Chinese traditional culture. Its elements of ethnicity, regionality, mass participation and inheritability have spanned a thousand years of history and constructed a unique cultural complex. Sports globalization is an inevitable trend of historical development. Facing the impact of Western sports, the multi-dimensional values of Traditional Chinese Ethnic Sports in culture, fitness, education and economy further confirm the necessity of its protection and inheritance. In the future, Traditional Chinese Ethnic Sports should adhere to the "people-oriented" concept of harmonious development, combine the essence of Chinese sports culture with modern sports culture, conform to the trend of the times, and realize the continuation and development of Traditional Chinese Ethnic Sports.

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