

Research on the Development of Dragon Dance in Huayao Yi People's Festival of "Offering a Sacrifice to Dragon"

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Abstract—Dragon dance in the ceremony of Huayao Yi people's Festival of "Offering a Sacrifice to Dragon" is a sacrificial culture developed on the basis of Chinese ethnic culture and oriented to ethnic traditional sports. This Festival is one of the representative ethnic celebrations of Huayao Yi people. Its rituals of offering a sacrifice to dragon and dragon dance are not only the everlasting epitomes of the ethnic culture, but also the typical models of ethnic traditional sports. Meanwhile, "Huayao Yi" is Nisu branch of Yi people and descendant of ancient Qiang people. Females participating in dragon dance would wear a mysterious veil. Hence, making a deep excavation on its culture becomes a historical mission. In this context, it is necessary to make research on this ancient ethnic sport system.

Keywords—Festival of "Offering a Sacrifice to Dragon"; Huayao Yi; dragon dance; ethnic festival

I. INTRODUCTION

In the context of the current times, this paper makes an exploration on the life styles and customs of Huayao Yi people by a comprehensive use of database and various text data and searching relevant records. A comprehensive analysis is made on Huayao Yi people's culture to grasp its inherent ethnic cultural characteristics. Then an in-depth integration is made on relevant researches and records about Huayao Yi people's Festival of "Offering a Sacrifice to Dragon" (hereinafter referred to as the Festival) to explore the intrinsic connection between its culture and skill. Secondly, the researchers made a field investigation in local place, and experienced the Festival, watched the whole process and made a record. What they observed includes the local geography, Huayao Yi people's life style and attitude towards festivals, the process and form of sacrificing, the production of dragons and the ways and methods of dragon dance. This way can help researchers to intuitively and

effectively integrate into the Festival on the whole to make analysis and exploration on its external performance from its internal part. Finally, the researchers interviewed with the major host of the Festival, representative inheritors of dragon dance and some common villagers. The memory of the nation passed down from generation to generation is often persisted in the skills passed down by oral communication. Through the interviews with the responsible person and inheritors, the researchers obtained and sorted out the oral information collected, then made an integrated analysis and exploration on the result obtained in combination with literature query and field investigation methods and also make a longitudinal exploration on the culture and ethnic characteristics carried by the Festival. Deposited in the long history, folk culture has become an important information source for researchers to discover the integration of sacrifice and dragon dance in the celebration of the Festival, and always shown rich ethnic characteristics no matter in the selected time and the content form; females' dragon dance (male and female dragons) is more special in its dragon dance culture. This will add an important part to the study of ethnic characteristic culture, and will also provide a substantial reference for enriching traditional ethnic sports and enhancing dragon dance culture.

II. DRAGON DANCE IN THE RITUAL OF THE FESTIVAL

The dragon dance activity is a traditional ethnic cultural form in peasants' life and different from urban culture. At the same time, in the process of spreading of sports in rural area, the activity may also show people a spiritual sentiment of "where there is no carrying forward and flourishing of culture, there is no realization of Chinese Dream" The sports in rural area led by the Communist Party have brought great changes in the construction of dragon culture.

The ancestral halls in villages may play a great social role in the historical period. At that time, ancestral hall was used to offer sacrifices to gods or ancestors. With the migration of history, after the reform and opening up, ancestral hall gradually disappeared from the stage of history. Although there is no ancestral hall any more, the diverse traditional culture such as sacrifice and religious beliefs have been passed down by people. It is precisely because of the changes in history that it is needed to pass down Chinese ethnic culture, and find unique ethnic sports culture and its charm in the diverse traditional culture. Among them, dragon dance in the Festival is one item of the culture to be passed down.

Sacrifice is a part of Chinese traditional culture since ancient times. It not only relies on performance, but more depends on sacrifice ceremony rituals to get Chinese people know about the wisdom of the ancestors and the potential ethnic culture in the sacrifices. At present, the Huayao Yi females' Dragon Dance has attracted extensive attention of scholars in various fields. In this paper, from the perspective of sacrifice ritual conducted in the Festival, it is believed that "Dragon Dance" is a product of sacrifice ritual under the flourishing development of ethnic traditional culture. It affects and is also affected by ethnic identity, and its development protection requires collaborative participation of local communities. This paper analyzes the laboring and entertainment forms of the ethnic women on the basis of the development of Huayao Yi females' dragon dance in the Festival. It is aimed at finding whether the development of the ethnic females' dragon dance is required by the sacrifice ritual.

A. Dragon Dance Developed in Full Swing

With the coming of the era of "cultural confidence", various traditional cultures show flourishing development vitality. Excellent ethnic traditional sports also follow the call of the times, walk in the forefront of cultural development, and even set off a wave of ethnic traditional sports. The famous sociologist Fei Xiaotong mentioned in his "From the Soil — The Foundations of Chinese Society" that "Chinese society has unique soil characteristics". The ethnic traditional sports activities are also raised by people and most of them are involved in festival ceremony and religious ritual activity. Among them, dragon dance as a cultural symbol of folk religious beliefs and culture presents the oldest cultural rituals in today's rural society. [1]

Dragon dance is a treasure of the Chinese ethnic traditional culture, the support of ethnic wisdom, spirit and consciousness, and also a collective fitness and entertainment activity. [2] Nowadays, the progress of dragon dance art is closely related to the development of Chinese ethnic traditional culture. The vigorous development of dragon dance is closely related to the continuous improvement of people's living standards. The dragon dance culture in China is very profound; and with respect to its artistic dissemination, it is still needed to determine the subject and object. Dragon dance has become one of the important means of exchanging emotions between community and towns. It can be said that dragon dance includes the material

and cultural level and encompasses the deepest level of spiritual civilization. Today's dragon dance has been developed in full swing.

B. The Little-known Huayao Yi People's Festival of "Offering a Sacrifice to Dragon"

In Shaochong Town, Shiping County, Yunnan Province, there is an ancient ethnic tribe "Huayao Yi". It is Nisu branch of Yi people and descendant of ancient Qiang people. The village maintains its original historical features; and the typical ethnic ritual celebration activity "the Festival" subtly survives in the tribe. Offering sacrifice first and dragon dance second is a unique manner of activity arrangement. The two-dragon (male dragon and female dragon) dance performance demonstrates the ethnic people's desire for reproduction. [3] In Yunnan region in the southwestern border of China, there is a world-famous dragon dance team — Huayao Yi females' dragon dance team. This team has unique style based on its ethnic cultural deposit. One of the most representative features is that the team is composed of 12 young women, indicating the belief culture of 12 Chinese zodiacs (representing the twelve Earthly Branches) and 12 years. [4]

III. DRAGON DANCE IN THE CEREMONY OF THE FESTIVAL

"Strengthening cultural confidence and promoting cultural prosperity". The rich and diverse Chinese culture is reflected in the distinctive regional cultures in detail. When it comes to the regional dragon dance culture, what come into mind are various soft cultures in the society. However, Huayao Yi people's dragon dance is a hard substantial culture and is more marginalized in more prosperous society. But as a culture inheritance form, the dragon dance is an essential part for maintaining the integrity of regional ethnic culture. [5] When dragon dance had not yet been developed into an art, it was only an activity integrated sacrifice, belief, and entertainment. In Huayao Yi people, Huayao dragon dance has formed a unique cultural card that local people are proud of. Today, the dragon dance activity is one of the development hubs between urban and rural areas. Its activity is also one of the most ethnic activities in Chinese ethnic groups. When the dragon dance is fully integrated into everyone's life, it is conducive to the development of ethnic culture, the construction process between villages and towns.

A. The Symbol of Ethnic Culture Makes Huayao Yi People's Style of "Worshipping the Dragon"

In addition to being a nation with a spiritual belief of respecting and worshipping the tiger, Yi is also a nation respecting and worshipping the dragon. Dragon is the cultural symbol of Chinese nation, and is also prominent in Yi people's culture. [6] From myths to legends, from totems to worshipping the dragon, and from scenic spots to festival ceremonies and many other religious cultures, Yi people's respecting and worshipping the dragon and their yearning for dragon dance make the Festival of the nation more mysterious and colorful. [7] The dragons believed by Huayao Yi people includes male and female dragons; women dance with green dragon (namely the female dragon),

while men dance with yellow dragon (namely the male dragon), which indicates the best wishes to prosperity of their future generations and is also an emotional sustenance that Huayao Yi people give blessings to the dragon. [8]

B. Time and Player Selections for the Festival

The Festival is an important festival of Yi people; hence, the time selection also has certain characteristics. [9] A lively and extraordinary ceremony of offering sacrifice to the great dragon will be held in the day of horse, month of horse of every year of horse in the twelve-year cycle. At the time, there will be thousands of people all over the place, with loud percussion sound. Usually, the Festival is held every year, and the time of sacrifice is different in each village; usually, the activity is held in lunar January, February, and March. Huayao Yi people's dragon dance is performed by twelve unmarried girls. The twelve members constitute a long dragon and represent the twelve Chinese zodiacs and twelve years. [10] Dragon dance also has diverse forms, and gives audiences a visual enjoyment, such as the well-known Feng Wu Long and Long Feng Cheng Xiang. At that time, Huayao Yi females' Dragon Dance team took part in many major performances and competitions all over China and was popular throughout China; of course, this is also the first females' dragon dance team in the history of China. [11]

C. Attribution of Huayao Yi Females' Dragon Dance

Huayao Yi females' dragon dance is developed along with the development of religious culture. Next, according to historical data, it can be seen that since Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties, males among Huayao Yi people had mainly undertaken some trivialities and hunting in the busy season, while married women were often busy with household chores, and also shouldered the heavy task of taking care of their husbands and teaching their sons. Hence, they all were not conditioned for participating in the training of Huayao dragon dance team both in time and conditions. [12] In addition, the dragon dance is a fierce sport. Only young females can adapt to this high-intensity exercise that combines skill and physical strength. Moreover, they do not have the burden from the family and can fully participate in the dragon dance. [13] The two-dragon dance form makes females' dragon dance becoming a tradition, and further reflects Huayao Yi people's expressive understanding of the prosperous situation shown by mutual dance of male and female dragons.

IV. CONCLUSION

The inheritance of ancient religious sacrificial culture is the foundation of the rise of dragon dance, and is also one of ancient people's physical exercise forms. [14] The evolution of the "Dragon Dance" from the "Dragon Dance" form to the "Hand-held Dragon Dance" in this historical period is the foundation laid for the development of modern competitive dragon dance. Due to the perfection of the competition system of dragon dance, the standards are relatively uniform. In July 2017, dragon dance sport was successfully incorporated into high-level stadium such as the National Games. Since then, dragon dance has been out of folk stages

and entered athletic fields. Up to now, this sport has also become a well-developed sport among ethnic traditional sports. It can be said that the incorporation is a most beneficial step for the development of Chinese traditional sports. Huayao dragon dance is developed in the context of the ethnic culture. In aspect of performance form, the ethnic culture elements shown before audiences are more flexible no matter in the action shape performed in the process of the sacrificial ritual and the action conversion between rolling and unrolling dragons and in other aspects. The sport reflects the regional characteristics and cultural characteristics, making it a culture representing Yunnan region and even a cultural brand of China.

The research on folk beliefs, rituals and their representations can not only provide an angle to examine the traditional sports culture of the nation, but also has important significance for understanding the culture of dragon dance in the sacrificial ritual. [15] Huayao females' dragon dance, as a representation of folk culture, has undergone changes in the process of long-term performances both in China and foreign countries, and affects the expression of ideological clan emotions, ethnic memories and ethnic cultural identity in the region.

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