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## Heritage learning perspective folk sporting events

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### ABSTRACT

Folk sporting events as the original ecosystem, native, embodies the concept for survival free from sporting events, has a profound ethnic characteristics, country charm and flavor of life. In this paper, literature, expert interviews, case studies, field visits and other research methods, learn from the legacy of Chinese folk Perspective analyze sporting events, demonstration of its important heritage features, it is human heritage, human oral and Intangible Heritage of unity.

### KEYWORDS

Heritage learning; Folk sports; Heritage; Intangible heritage.



## INTRODUCTION

Concerning Chinese athletic competition and performance market, the research into professional and commercial sports events in the perspective of diversified needs has adopted the policy of “following and copying the Western countries,” thus forming a unified market-oriented operation model. As the saying goes, “what belongs to the nation belongs to the world!” The folk sports events, including dragon boat race, Nadam Fair, Derby, the Kite Festival, the Martial Arts Contest, Ten-thousand People Tug-of-War and kokpar (an equestrian sport), not only boast general characteristics of sports events, but have also become an important part of national cultural heritage due to their dense national characteristics, profound cultural and historical deposit and their primary significance of life atmosphere, local appeal and romantic color, and an important element of human sports events civilization<sup>[1]</sup>. During the long exploration journey of humans, the cultural heritage has been ranged from material, tangible and static ones to intangible, dynamic and memory ones.

## DEFINITIONS OF RELEVANT CONCEPTS

As a form of thinking, concept can reflect the distinctive attributes of something. It has constituted the basic element of scientific theories. Before studying the national folk sports events in the perspective of heritage, several relevant concepts should be learned, which is fundamental to the whole research.

### National folk sports and sports events

#### National folk sports

During the generation and development process of national folk sports, different scholars have developed different understanding and perceptions. “National folk sports” has been a compound terminology which limits the sports culture through two determiners, namely “national” and “folk.” It refers to the sports culture with the fixed methods and cultural connotation and directly created during the daily life and activities of the great masses of a specific nation or country. As a sports culture, it embodies the value orientation of a nation, influences the lifestyle of a nation and demonstrates the cohesion of national self-identification<sup>[2]</sup>. It has permeated into every aspect of Chinese culture, thus becoming an important part of national culture. With the development of various social fields, constant change of people’s concept, and the government’s attention to national culture, the organization forms, financing channels and information feedback of national folk sports have kept evolving and upgrading, becoming quicker and more convenient. Despite of the above changes, the nature of national folk sports remains the same.

#### National folk sports events

Here are two dimensions of national folk sports events. In terms of the attributes of national sports, national folk sports events are a concept different from modern sports events and foreign sports events. In terms of the attributes of folk sports, national folk sports events are a concept different from official and mainstream sports events. On the whole, national folk sports events is distinctive from modern mainstream sports events. Being indigenous, they reflect the survival concept of “living and developing for oneself.” The two dimensions constitute the attributes of national folk sports<sup>[3]</sup>. The author thought that national folk sports events refer to the sports events held in the daily life of the common public and providing sports competition products and relevant services made and used by a nation. Besides, such events should be organized, systemized and professionalized, whose organization should include unilateral, bilateral and multilateral forms, such as public spontaneous organizations, government-dominated organizations and market operation. National folk sports events are both important festivals and special events. Currently, Chinese national folk sports events demonstrate the pattern of “holding by the government and the public to participate.” Such examples can be found in Miluo International Dragon Boat Festival in Hunan Province; Maqu Gesar Horse Racing in Gansu Province, Weifang International Kite Festival, etc. All these sports events feature five characteristics, namely standardization, institutionalization, popularization, internationalization and marketization, which are conducive to the inheritance and development of national folk sports events.

### Tangible and intangible heritage

#### Tangible heritage

Tangible heritage include the heritage with cultural value and demonstrated paperless<sup>[4]</sup>. It includes cultural heritage and natural heritage. According to Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (CCPWCN), tangible cultural heritage includes historical relics, historical architecture and human cultural relics, or the material, tangible and static heritage mentioned above. However, natural heritage is required to be in line with not only the standard of natural beauty, but also scientific, geographic and species standards. It mainly refers to the natural landscape and artificial environment. To put it simply, the natural environment, ecological environment and living environment in this world all belong to natural heritage.

#### Oral and intangible heritage

The concept of the oral and intangible heritage can be divided into three aspects: 1) Broad meaning: intangible, oral and immaterial heritage opposite to material heritage, historical sites, historical and cultural relics and classics; apart from

specific oral culture, intangible heritage also refers to human behavior and human body culture, or descendent culture; 2) Narrow meaning: oral and intangible heritage features folk oral literature, folk art, folk culture, traditional performance art, folk science and technique, folk knowledge and folk arts and crafts; 3) Representative works of oral and intangible heritage feature the essence of “oral and intangible heritage” in the narrow sense and supplemented by endangered oral and intangible heritage, which have been listed in the world heritage catalogue. Their identification standards are “representativeness” and “being endangered” and with world form and global value and significance<sup>[5]</sup>. They are immaterial, intangible, dynamic and memory heritage. Intangible material cultural heritage include five aspects, namely oral legends and narration (including languages, which are the media of intangible cultural heritage), performance art, social customs, ceremonies, festivals and traditional handicraft techniques. They are social, intangible, dynamic, national, popular, diversified and vulnerable, and can be inherited<sup>[6]</sup>.

## **ANALYSIS OF NATIONAL FOLK SPORTS EVENTS IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF HERITAGE**

The value and function of national folk sports events are indispensable in the social and economic development process due to their unique social attraction, political appeal, economic competitiveness and cultural appeal. By integrating events, folk customs, festivals, tourism and heritage, they are an important spiritual asset to the Chinese nation. Paying attention to and protecting national folk sports events are an act of caring and protecting human heritage.

### **National folk sports events and intangible heritage**

In the inheritance and development process, national folk sports events have been combined with the local natural and geographical heritage into a series of major buildings, historical sites, culture landscape (such as China’s Silk Road), mobile cultural heritage (including the fragile portable heritage articles or artifacts, such as imitated articles of Terra-Cotta Warriors in Xi’an) and museums.

### **Miluo International Dragon Boat Festival in Hunan Province and tangible heritage**

Miluo International Dragon Boat Festival in Hunan Province boasts its special culture connotation, which integrates culture of Qu Yuan, water culture, dragon culture, Hunan culture, dragon boat culture and religion culture. The rich material heritage, including the Miluo River, Qu Yuan Temple (the place where the Faculty of Arts of Central South University confers its students with the bachelor, master and doctoral degree), ancestral halls of various surnames (Xie Family Ancestral Hall in Xinyue Village, Heshi Town along the Miluo River), Dragon Boat Manufacturing Plant (Shenwang Dragon Boat Manufacturing Plant, Jiuzilong Qu Yuan Dragon Boat Manufacturing Plant, Feilong Dragon Boat Manufacturing Plant, Yulong Dragon Boat Manufacturing Plant, Xionglong Dragon Boat Plant, etc.), Dragon Boat Club (Shenwang Dragon Boat Club integrating dragon boat manufacturing, dragon boat racing training and contest), Dragon Boat Travel Agency, etc.

### **Maqu Gesar horse racing in gansu province and tangible heritage**

Maqu Gesar Horse Racing in Gansu Province integrates the horse culture, grassland culture, religion and sacrificial culture, Gesar culture, Tibet culture and folk culture. It is a grand multi-ethnic cultural fair featuring horse racing and including the rap art, national customs, farm products and pasture products, folk culture, sacrifice, religion belief, trade and economic activities and national exchange. Tangible material includes “The World’s First Bend of the Yellow River,” “The Cradle of Gesar,” “The Most Beautiful Marsh Grassland in the World,” “The First Natural Pasture in Asia,” “Flora and Fauna Grand View Garden” (Yak in Awancang—“The Ship in the Plateau,” Hequ horse—“The Oriental Magic Horse,” Oula sheep—“The King of Tibetan Sheep” and Hequ Tibetan Mastiff, one of the four famous dogs), Maqu Gesar Horse Racing Center and Gesar Culture Plaza.

### **Weifang International Kite Festival and tangible heritage**

Weifang International Kite Festival boasts rich tangible heritage, including World Kite Museum (the origin and development of kites, the collection of all kite contests and display of kites all over the world), Yangjiafu Folk Art Grand View Garden (the making of Yangjiafu kites and New Year paintings), Fuyan Mountain Kite Flying Ground, kite manufacturers, retailers and wholesalers in high streets and back lanes of Weifang City, and the stadium where the evening parties celebrating the opening of Weifang International Kite Festival are held).

### **National folk sports events and oral and intangible cultural heritage**

#### **The classification of oral and intangible heritage**

Oral and intangible heritage is a typical human body culture, which mainly includes four types: 1) oral culture, namely oral and voice expressions, narration, recitation and singing culture and art, such as myths, legends, proverbs and folk songs, etc.; 2) human body art, namely art and culture with human body, behavior, postures and movements as the major expression forms and expression objects, including body ornament culture featuring visual art, body art with body shape and limbs as the major art language, behavior art featuring folk culture, folk art and folk musical instrument performance, which are visual and audio art and space and time art; 3) comprehensive culture, namely the art combining oral and body art, which is a comprehensive visual, audio, space and time art, including comprehensive art featuring oral languages, such as rap art,

comprehensive art featuring both oral languages and body performance, such as operas, folk plays and songs and dances; 4) current plastic art, namely the current live creations and creatures, which refer to space art and visual art, including architecture techniques and buildings, creations and techniques of folk art descendants and artists<sup>[7]</sup>. All in all, the above classifications refer to and are based on three classification methods of culture, namely function-based classification, form-based classification and object-based classification.

### **National folk sports events and oral and intangible cultural heritage**

#### **Miluo International Dragon Boat Festival in Hunan Province and oral and intangible cultural heritage**

In September 2009, the customs around the Miluo River on Dragon Boat Festival entered the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, which mainly include customs before and during the dragon boat racing and zongzi, a rice dumpling for Dragon Boat Festival. Due to the rich heritage content and complete heritage system, Quyuán culture has become renowned all over the world as an important asset of human civilization. They are a part of the Chinese nation and the world as well. Miluo International Boast Festival has thus been endowed with richer culture connotation. Against the current era background featuring flourishing development, the spirit of Quyuán is doomed to be a spiritual symbol and embodiment of humans, and an enlightenment of human's values in the new era.

1) Dialects are an important category of intangible cultural heritage. Undoubtedly, language plays an important role in cultural inheritance. Dialects are an obvious symbol of regional culture and a direct carrier recognized by history and culture. They provide the fertile soil to nourish the regional culture<sup>[8]</sup>. China is a huge family made up of 56 nationalities. Due to the large number of population, there are many dialects, including Shandong Dialect, Hunan Dialect, Tibetan, Mongolian, Yunnan Dialect, Cantonese, etc. All these dialects form an important national cultural gene or cultural heritage.

2) The Miluo River boasts a time-honored history and profound culture. Even since the ancient times, the Miluo River has the tradition of "holding dragon boat racing to commemorate Quyuán." Thus, it is reputed as the "Origin of Dragon Boat Festival and Hometown of Dragon Boat." In history, there was a series of mysterious and solemn ceremonies from the manufacturing of the dragon boat to the dragon boat racing, namely assembling wood, connecting the dragon head, entering the water, fighting for the red ribbon, worshipping the temple, and bathing on Dragon Boat Festival. With the ancestral hall as the unit, the dragon boat is named after the surnames. The number of rowers for the dragon boat racing should be an even number rather than an odd number, equally distributed on the left and right side<sup>[9]</sup>.

3) On dragon boat racing team should wear uniforms. In this way, audiences and relatives and friends cheering team can easily recognize different teams. This is an inheritance of the Hunan ritual culture. The dragon boats participating in the racing is drawn with the dragon head and the body part with dragon design, which demonstrate not only people's reverence and admiration of totem, but also their wish of an ideal life with happiness and auspice.

4) During the racing, International Quyuán Culture Symposium will also be held so as to enhance people's comprehensive understanding of Quyuán culture, thus to better inherit and carry forward Quyuán culture. Currently, Quyuán culture and spirit has been integrated into the daily production of life of the local people. The bridge in Miluo City is named "Quyuán Bridge" and Hongqi reservoir is named "Quyuán Lake." There is also Quyuán Local Dish Restaurant and Quyuán Lanyun Wine. The Miluo River March Construction Area is named Miluo Quyuán Hall Dragon Boat Culture Tourism Zone, which is one of the top ten domestic tourism brand construction projects that the Hunan Provincial Government gave wide attention to during the Fifth 11-year Plan period.

5) The dragon boat racing emphasizes strong cohesion, awareness of unity and struggling spirit. All teammates have to cooperate with each other in one heart and one mind so as to achieve good results. Dragon boats are progression ahead like arrows out of the chord among percussion, slogans, hubbub, bawl and laugh. The dragon boat spirit is a demonstration of Hunan people's self-improving, firm and indomitable spirit.

6) Established in 2004, H Jiuzilong Quyuán Dragon Boat Manufacturing Plant is located around the Miluo River, the holy land to commemorate Quyuán. It is also a base where the older generation made dragon boats. Xu Guisheng, the plant director, has been engaged in manufacturing dragon boats for more than 30 years. As the inheritor of dragon boat making techniques, his unique techniques have been listed as the intangible cultural heritage under the national protection. The Plant has sold its products to Beijing, Sichuan, Fujian, Shaanxi and other places in China, and Burma, Korea and Malaysia as well.

#### **Maqu Gesar Horse Racing in Gansu Province与oral and intangible cultural heritage**

"What belongs to the nation belongs to the world!" Due to the national characteristics, regional characteristics, natural resources, ethnic customs and sentiments and religious belief, Maqu Gesar Horse Racing has been endowed with unique. Horse racing is not only a party for herdsmen to share their livestock production experiences during their spare time, but also a profound historical deposit and a demonstration of Tibetan group's spirit. With a deep affection for horses, the Tibetan people have created horse racing culture with unique ethnic characteristics. Some people once likened Gesar Horse Racing as "Olympic Games on Grassland." It shows the grassland landscape and folk culture, sings the praises of the primary spirit and culture of the grassland people, and appeals people to get close to nature.

1) As a Tibetan colony where all people hold religious belief, Maqu is famous for its profound religious culture. The local herdsmen admire gods, reflects the special relationship between humans and gods, humans and nature and humans and Gesar culture. It is a cultural phenomenon. In the opening ceremony of Gesar Horse Racing, grand rites are expected to be

held with pine and cypress branches burned as a sacrifice to the god and ask the god to bless them. This is a religious folk custom, which was record in *Bibliography of King Gesar* and has been maintained to this date. Though the religious activities show a theological concept in terms of the religious intention, they also show the Tibetan people's self-recognition of humanity and materialism of self-improvement.

2) *Bibliography of King Gesar* is a great and longest heroic epic in the world created by the Tibetan people. It covers the history, culture, folk culture, folk customs, military and values of the Tibetan people<sup>[10]</sup>. As an important carrier of religious belief, local knowledge, folk wisdom, ethnic group history and language expression, the book provides the inspiration source not only for Thangka, Tibetan opera, singing while playing a stringed instrument, but also for the modern art forms.

3) During the horse racing, activities including economic and trade, catering, gourmet culture, The First Maqu Tibetan Mastiff Exhibition and Rating and Culture Forum, Terra-cotta Figures of the Qin Dynasties and Hequ Horse Themed Research Forum, recommendation of investment and business promotion projects, Tibetan people's traditional polo performance are held. Besides a series of national and provincial intangible cultural heritage are exhibited, including Gesar rap, pox horn musical instrument performance, hundred-people singing accompanied by the playing of Longtouqin musical instrument, Tibetan solo, etc.

4) While appreciating Gesar Horse Racing in Maqu Grassland, one can enjoy the ethnic customs, folk culture, including horsing racing culture, costume culture, religious sacrifice culture, and the beauty of nature, and learn to adopt a positive, brave and hard-working attitude towards life. Gesar Horse Racing is a grand fair and witness to Chinese national unity and integration.

### **Weifang International Kite Festival and oral and intangible cultural heritage**

Weifang is the cradle of the kite. Back in the 1930s, Weifang held kite contests. After the emancipation of the Chinese nation, especially since Chin's adoption of the reform and opening up, the auspice of Weifang International Kite Festival has been revitalized. For many times, Weifang has been invited to attend kite exhibition and fling performance both home and abroad. On April 2, 1984, under the warm-hearted help of David Chekley and the great support of Shandong Provincial Tourism Bureau, the First Weifang International Kite Festival was held. On April 1, 1988, the Fifth Weifang International Kite Festival decided to hold a presidium conference to confer Weifang City with the title of "World Kite Capital." During the sixth Weifang International Kite Festival, an International Kite Joint Association joined by kite organizations of 16 countries, including America, Japan, Britain and Italy was established and headquartered in Weifang City. Since then, Weifang has become a world kite culture exchange center, and fully deserved the title of "World Kite Capital."

1) After historical evolution and horizontal transmission, Weifang kits have gradually formed the traditional style and art characteristics of careful material selection, beautiful shape, exquisite pasting, vivid image, gorgeous painting and flexibility. Together with Beijing and Tianjing kites, it adds radiance and beauty to each other, but separates itself from the two with its unique characteristics. Currently, Weifang kits are diversified. Due to different life experiences, educational backgrounds and knowledge structure of kite artists and kite makers of all circles, different systems and scholars have been formed, which can namely be divided into the following three kinds: 1) traditional and folk school (collective creation, dense local characteristics and relatively coarse); 2) traditional artist school (solemn, luxurious, and upgrade Weifang kites from ordinary toys to valuable artwork and an important part of Weifang local culture); and modern innovational school (emphasize on the use of new materials and new techniques, simple, refreshing and artistic shape, and clear era characteristics).

2) Weifang Kite Art Research and Exchange Association is a voluntary association specializing in the research and exchange of kite art. It is a member of Chinese Arts and Crafts Association and Shandong Provincial Arts Association, aiming at carrying forward Chinese traditional culture, contributing to the exchange and publicity of Chinese kite culture and art and promoting the development of Chinese kite undertaking. Based on the Chinese traditional kite art, the Association has organically combined high technology and traditional techniques, kept on studying and developing new products, enriching people's culture and art life and promoting the exchange of Chinese kite culture, folk art and folk culture and local economic development. The expert team and general quality of the association has reached the highest level in China. They have conducted extensive exchange and cooperation with domestic and foreign counterparts with the exchange of kite culture as the carrier and actively take part in various forms of exhibitions, festival celebrations, trade and economic cooperation to jointly promote the exchange activities of the folk culture and art and the development of the kite undertaking in China and in the international arena.

3) Established in May 1986, Yangjiafu Folk Art Grand View Garden (predecessor: Yangjiafu Kite Plant) has been the largest kite plant in China. It is offers a grand view of folk art integrating kite production, New Year paintings printing and folk customs tourism. Within Yangjiafu Folk Art Grand View Garden, there are scores of places of interest and exhibition rooms, a kite museum, a painting museum, 18 Females' Workshop, New Year Painting Museum, New Year Painting Workshop, Folk Customs Museum, Cultural Relic Museum, 100-Year Marriage Certificate Exhibition, Agricultural Farm Tools Exhibition, Collection Museum in the Revolutionary Exhibition, Calligraphy and Painting Exhibition, The Platform for Goddess Chang E's Flying to the Moon, Stores Selling Ancient Articles, Sanxing Lake, Dushuo Mountain and Yangjiafu ancient villages and ancient locust trees in the Ming and Qing Dynasty. While enjoying the fun of kite making and New Year paintings printing, the visitors can also appreciate the lifestyle of Yangjiafu people several hundred years ago and

experience the ancient folk customs of Yangjiafu people. On May 20, 2006, Weifang kite making techniques and New Year paintings making techniques were approved by the State Council into the first batch of National Intangible Cultural heritage Catalogue.

4) Established in 1987, Weifang Kite Museum is located in Weifang City. It is the first professional kite museum in China, covering a building area of 8,100 meters. The building shape features the characteristics of bibcock and centipede combined kite. The ridge features a complete porcelain dragon, and the roof is paved with peacock orchid glazed tiles, which looks like a dragon roaming on the sky when viewed from the distance. Such a design style is unique in China. The “World Kite Capital” Exhibition features more than 1,000 boutique kites of five categories, namely the plate type, the hard-winged, the soft-winged and the cluster style, and more than 300 full and accurate kite cultural relic data to comprehensively and objectively reflect the unique theme, beautiful shape, exquisite painting and bright colors of Weifang kites. These data not only show the foreign kites with bold conception, exaggerated style and colors in sharp contrast, and emphasizing on flying performance and research value, but also represent the grand occasion of previous sessions. Annually, more than 30,000 people both home and abroad come to visit the kite museum, making the kite museum an important window for the opening up of Weifang City to the outside world.

5) Weifang International Kite Festival has become an important part of Weifang’s city culture and an important city name card as well. It has integrated into every field of the local people’s daily life. Kite-shaped benches and floor tiles on the pedestrian streets and parks, kite patterns on the back of the government staffs’ name cards and on the public buses, the physical kite models in the public buses...

### SUMMARY

National folk sports events boast important heritage characteristics. As a combination of tangible, oral and intangible heritage, they full demonstrate the characteristics of “you in me and me in you.” Undoubtedly, despite the size of a nation, its culture is a part of human culture assets. Oral and intangible heritage is collective and presented in the oral form. Though it has an inheritance tradition, it is now faced with the crisis of endangerment under the impact of modern media, but its important culture value and collective value are not to be ignored. Representative List of the Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity and World Heritage List stipulated in Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural heritage adopted by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization are efforts to rescue and protect the series of precious heritage, and a cultural project to record, save, evaluate, revitalize and sustain the heritage and make it shared by all humanity. Therefore, it calls for the joint attention and support of all people in the world. In terms of the inheritance and protection of Chinese national folk sports events, the government should take more responsibilities.

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