

Historical Review on the Spread of Chinese Martial Arts in Northern Europe

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Abstract: With literature data method and survey method, this paper studies the historical review on the spread of Chinese martial arts in northern Europe. Chinese martial arts is a national traditional sport. Therefore, the spread of Chinese martial arts in northern Europe is a continuation of the development of other traditional projects in the Nordic region which shows pluralism on introduction and development. The process of the spread of Chinese martial arts in northern Europe contains a process in which Chinese martial arts like other traditional sports have gradually been accepted and recognized by Nordic society.

1. Introduction

The history of spread of Chinese martial arts in northern Europe has a close relationship with globalization as well as social politics and economic environment of China. Besides, it is closely associated with the influence of China as a main communication subject on northern Europe (Xu Zhiwei, 1991). Therefore, if we want to analyze and explain the historical evolution of the spread of Chinese martial arts in northern Europe, we must have a review of the development process of modern Chinese martial arts and its spreading history in northern Europe.

2. Global Development Providing Opportunities for the Spread of Chinese Martial Arts in Northern Europe

In the beginning of globalization, what many people have seen is the positive effect it brings to the world. So it mostly gets praise wherever it goes. Some scholars believe that globalization is a tendency of the world's development and is also the key for people to understand that human beings have stepped into the 21st century. Others consider globalization a master key to open up the door connecting modern society and the future world (Zhou Weiliang, 2006).

Having gone through the so-called "globalization" which lasts nearly half a century, people start

to take a new look at the various disadvantages that globalization brings to human society. In April, 2000, Annan, former General Secretary of the United Nations, rethought on one economic conference that globalization led by developed countries has posed unprecedented challenges to the political and economic security and humanistic values of developing countries (Zhang Hongyu and Li Xiaolan, 2006).

Globalization is a two-way communication process which removes the misunderstanding of politics, economy or the culture among countries and encourages closer relationship in politics, economy and social humanity. Therefore, we can have a clear understanding of the meaning of sports globalization. That is, on one hand, various martial arts in the modern world have been developing and integrating, forming the world sports culture which is tendentious. On the other hand, sports globalization is a game process of constant conflict, integration and reselection of various national traditional sports in the world. Simultaneously, this process is a dynamic and two-way communication process.

Thus, when facing sports globalization led by the Olympic culture, the uppermost task is that we need to treat Chinese martial arts as an important part of world's sports culture, consciously engaging in the creativity of world's sports culture and proactively cope with the negative effects that sports globalization brings to us. We should change from passive response to active involvement and strive for the rights of equal dialogue between Chinese national sports culture and modern sports culture led by Olympics (Jiang Zhaoli, 2003).

3. The Establishment of Diplomatic Ties between China and the Northern European Countries Offering Protection for the Spread of Martial Arts in Northern Europe

According to the historical data, during the First World War, many migrants from Qingtian, Zhejiang Province moved from Germany and France to countries of northern Europe. In this way, many Chinese martial arts events were gradually spreading to northern Europe (K. Lin, 2005).

After the founding of PRC on October 1st, 1949, China has established diplomatic ties with various countries in northern Europe. From 1949 to 1978, China respectively established diplomatic relations with Sweden (May 9th, 1950), Denmark (May 11th, 1950), Finland (October 28th, 1950), Norway (October 5th, 1954) and Iceland (December 8th, 1971). So far, the ethnic Chinese and overseas Chinese living in northern Europe have been deeply cherishing the long-last sense of national pride and self-esteem. Chinese Kungfu, dragon and lion dance have emerged and been well-known to the northern European people.

After the reform and opening up policy, China has enjoyed a stable society and rapid growth in her economy. With its comprehensive national power increasing day by day, a prosperous and powerful China reveals itself in the world. The ethnic Chinese and overseas Chinese living in northern Europe went back to China in succession to see the great changes. With unparalleled pride, they introduced the styles and features of their hometown to northern Europe, building a bridge for the non-governmental exchanges between China and northern Europe. China's role as a main communication subject was widely reflected when spreading to northern Europe. Each country in northern Europe has established in succession single-event association of traditional Chinese sports including Chinese martial arts, dragon dance, lion dance, Qigong, dragon boat, kite and so on. The success of Beijing Olympic Games allows the spread of Chinese martial arts in northern Europe to reach its highest level ever.

4. Historical Evolution of the Spread of Chinese Martial Arts in Northern Europe

4.1 The First Landing on Northern Europe—Struggling for Survive and Pontaneous Attempt

From World War I to the founding of PRC in 1949, the earliest Chinese migrants in northern Europe were mostly workers in Germany and France. They migrated from wars to northern Europe which was a vast territory with a sparse population and resources. At first, they opened Nanquan Martial Arts School and promoted the Dragon Springs Sword of Shaolin just to make a living. On Chinese traditional festivals or grand celebration, the dragon and lion dances became the joyous activities with Chinese brand. So far, Chinese martial arts have inadvertently landed on northern Europe by virtue of the ethnic Chinese.

However, at that time, China was in peril and wars broke out fiercely. Therefore, the process of spread of Chinese martial arts in northern Europe was unintentional, forced and spontaneous. It was mainly used for the ethnic Chinese to make a living. The content of communication depended completely on the social demand. The status of the transmitters was humbler compared with that of people in other industries.

4.2 Chinese Martial Arts – Cultural Consciousness and Self-esteem Gaining

From the founding of PRC in 1949 to the reform and opening up policy in 1978, the spread of Chinese martial arts in northern Europe entered a completely new stage. The social status of the ethnic and overseas Chinese in various countries of northern Europe had improved significantly. The mental state of the transmitters had transferred from self-abasement to self-confidence. The spread of Chinese martial arts in northern Europe had transferred from spontaneousness to self-awareness. Shifu, the Chinese traditional title, was no longer a name of masters of Chinese martial arts in northern Europe, which later means friendliness and respect.

Meanwhile, the communication contents of Chinese martial arts had radiated from single categories to other traditional Chinese sports events. Ancient Chinese Qigong (a system of deep breathing exercises), dragon boat race, kite, dragon dance and lion dance had appeared on the stage of sports and culture consumption in northern Europe, not only showing other profiles of Chinese martial arts to Nordic people, but also broadening the channels between China and northern Europe.

As the questionnaire investigation shows, the total number of fitness clubs based on Chinese Martial Arts, Qigong and lion dance in the Nordic market has reached 337, of which Denmark covers 118, Norway 16, Finland 115, Iceland 3, Sweden 85. Compared with traditional sports development of the third-country in Northern Europe, Brazilian jiu-jitsu only has 95 clubs in the Nordic, while Muay Thai only 109, which is far less than the number of Chinese national traditional sports clubs. Besides, the number of Chinese national traditional sports clubs is no less than that of Korean taekwondo clubs, even though Korean taekwondo is an Olympic project.

In a word, the development of national projects in the Nordic region shows pluralism on introduction and development.

4.3 Chinese Martial Arts—Conscious Behavior and Endeavor

The fastest growing period of China was between 1979 and 1999 (the 50th anniversary of the founding of PRC). After the reform and opening up policy, China's confidence and awaking consciousness were further strengthened. The Chinese government has fully embarked on a journey of the great rejuvenation of traditional Chinese culture. The inheritance and overseas dissemination of Chinese martial arts were greatly emphasized. The typical characteristics of this period were that the nation and government came forward to actively plan, organize and publicize Chinese martial

arts.

During this period of time, China enjoyed a stable politics and prosperous economy and its national consciousness was constantly intensified. The spread of Chinese martial arts in northern Europe developed at an unprecedented speed. Various countries in northern Europe in succession established single-event associations of national level. They carried out cooperative projects with Chinese government and offered financial and material aid for these single-event associations every year. Chinese martial arts no longer rested on the spread of material culture but developed its culture deeply.

4.4 Chinese Martial Arts with Sound System and Maturity

In the 21st century, the world has been focusing its attention on Chinese land due to the success of Olympic bid and Beijing Olympic Games. The labels of China and Chinese ethnic people seemed to be targets which the world pursues for overnight. In this period, the spread of Chinese martial arts in northern Europe, with sound system and maturity, has reached its peak. China has emphasized much on it and promoted it actively. Looking up all the existing related documents, it was not hard to find that almost all documents related to Chinese martial arts have become the focus after 2000 and the transmitting practice and theoretical research run parallel.

Simultaneously, the spread of Chinese martial arts in northern Europe has changed quietly. The students of northern Europe are no longer passive receivers. They are actively collecting tickets to China and preparing the closest contact with Chinese culture for the first time. Chinese martial arts are changing into an all-round and three-dimensional mode of transmission.

5. Conclusion

The development tendency of world sports culture should be full of ecological balance with dissimilarity and diversity, just like the development of the creatures in nature. As an Oriental civilization, Chinese martial arts is a national traditional sport. Therefore, the spread of Chinese martial arts in northern Europe is a continuation of the development of other traditional projects in the Nordic region which shows pluralism on introduction and development. The historical evolution process of the spread of Chinese martial arts in northern Europe contains a process in which Chinese martial arts like other traditional sports have gradually been accepted and recognized by Nordic society.

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