

# Sports Value of Yanhe Dance of Yi Nationality

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## **Abstract:**

This paper studies the Yanhe dance of Yi nationality by means of literature, it is concluded that Yanhe dance which has the fitness and entertainment value, enlightenment value and culture heritage value is very important in modern days and is the strong incentive in realizing the diversified development and the dream of sports power.

**Keywords:** *Yi nationality, Yanhe dance, National traditional sports.*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Yanhe dance, also known as “Zhandoubi” or “Nigaibi” in The Yi language, is a mass folk dance of the Nesu branch of the Yi people in Yunnan province. It was named because the dancers bounce and dance with a cigarette box made of bamboo or bark in each hand [1]. With the changes of society, Yanhe dance has developed into a fashionable fitness dance, and was selected in the 10th National Games in August 2015, during which Yunnan Provincial representative team won the first prize in the skills competition of performance events. On May 20, 2006, Yanhe dance was selected as the first national intangible cultural heritage. As one of the folk dances of minority nationalities, Yanhe dance is a treasure of minority sports, and the study and exploration of its sports value will certainly bring positive significance to the development and inheritance of minority sports in China, especially in the contemporary social changes.

## II. THE ORIGIN, CHARACTERISTICS AND DEVELOPMENT OF YANHE DANCE

The Yi people have an ancient cultural tradition. According to epic records, the Yi people love singing and dancing. For instance, there is a saying “The creation of the world and the construction of a village, Lao Zu Gong sang like a bird. Play elastic string on Yanyang road, play Lusheng on the tip of grass. The iron feet are hard and flat, climb mountains and dance till dawn”, which vividly depicts the Yi people’s creation and love of singing and dancing since ancient times. Yanhe dance is one of the most distinctive, most popular and highly developed sports dances. It is widely spread as a wonderful garden of Yi folk dances in Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture.

There are many legends about the origin of cigarette box dance, one of which is the theory of sacrifice. In the ancient clan and tribal society, when the ancestors hoped to turn calamities into blessings and have enough food, they would gather to sing, dance and offer gifts to the gods to entertain them and pray for their protection and help to eliminate disasters. After hunting animals, the Yi ancestors lit bonfires and sang and danced around them. Its purpose, on the one hand, is to thank the mountain god for giving the prey, and hope that the mountain god will be pleased and give more prey in the future; and on the other hand, to hold simple religious ceremonies to apologize for the prey.

The Yanhe dance is mainly presented in the form of circle, also known as circle dance. According to historical records, the circle dance in the form of the Yi people's Yanhe dance has existed for more than 3,000 years. In area 1 of site 7 of Cangyuan Cliff painting, there is an image of 5 people dancing in a circle [2]. Other scholars believe that the circular form of Yi's Yanhe dance originated from bonfire. In Yi language, “○” means "fire", which means eye, sun, moon. “○○”(double fire) means everything. When combining “Huo” with other syllables, for instance “Huo+Ji” means sun, and “Huo+Winnow” means moon [3]. During the nomadic period, fire was the main object of worship for the Yi people. Fire could not only bring light and warmth, but also was the main tool for them to conquer nature and obtain cooked food. Therefore, Yanhe dance originated from the worship of mountain god and fire. After the founding of The People's Republic of China, provincial and state literary and art workers went deep into the stockaded village of Yi people, and found that “dancing with strings” was characterized by dancers flicking Yanhe, so it was named “Yanhe dance”. In addition, some scholars believe that Yanhe dance originated from religious, military or labor life.

Yanhe dance is characterized by “soft, tough, crisp” body movements. “Soft” means there is softness in the movements, and the dancer should have supple body. “Toughness” refers to elasticity, stretching and shrinking properly, for instance like “monkey breaking corn”, “long worm over ridge”, “long worm twisting waist”. “Crisp” means that the action is clean and vigorous, and the Yanhe flipping sound is crisp and in tune [4]. All three requirements are indispensable. According to the traditional classification, Yanhe dance can be roughly divided into two categories: sine and miscellaneous string. "Three-step string" is the representative of sine Yanhe dance, which is the foundation and core of Yanhe dance. It is said that skillful dancers can dance on dustpan, so the sine Yanhe dance is also called "dustpan string". In addition, there are “two and a half steps”, “one and a half steps”, “bucket hoof shell”, “crooked string” and so on. On the basis of sine Yanhe dance, miscellaneous string Yanhe dance is processed and developed by folk artists. It is rich in content, diversified in form and highly skilled, which is an advanced stage in the development of Yanhe dance.

The formation, evolution and development of Yanhe dance are closely related to the special folk customs of Yi people. Yanhe dance has strong religious and regional characteristics, which used to

appear in festivals, weddings, funerals and other activities. During the Cultural Revolution, Yanhe dance was considered harmful and banned by the government. At the beginning of the reform and opening up, Yanhe dance was recognized by the people and supported by the government, and its function also changed. Modern people have improved the Yanhe dance, from the original male -female contradance evolved into a collective dance, and Yanhe dance has become an important content of cultural and sports activities. In August 2015, Yanhe dance was selected into the 10th National Games, from which the development of cigarette box dance ushered in new opportunities. As a treasure of the traditional culture of China's ethnic minorities, Yanhe dance has been recognized by the government and the people, and has been selected as the first batch of national intangible cultural heritage. Experts at home and abroad, including those in the field of traditional ethnic sports, have also studied and excavated the value of cigarette box dance from various levels.

### **III. THE SPORTS VALUE OF YANHE DANCE**

#### **3.1 The Fitness and Entertainment Value of Yanhe Dance**

The original Yanhe dance was performed by the ancient Yi people to flatter the gods during sacrificial ceremonies. Its purpose was to express respect to the gods and pray for more prey, so it had strong religious color. Yanhe dance is characterized by "soft, tough and crisp" body movements, which requires dancers to have higher physical quality. The Yanhe dance of pure dance type, such as three-step string, Saigudu, three-legged heinimo, has prominent style and rich rhythm. Dancers are required to coordinate their hands and feet, with vigorous and vigorous movements on their feet and a lively rhythm. The movements of their feet, such as kicking, turning, stepping, jumping and pointing, should be enthusiastic and rough, flexible and brisk. The skill typed Yanhe dance mostly imitates and performs animal forms, for instance "long worm twisting waist", "toad wrestling", "hanging gold hook upside down", etc. This kind of Yanhe dance is highly technical and difficult, and each part of the body needs a certain degree of softness and strength. The ground movement is mainly tumbling, and it requires the body to bend, stretch, stretch, close and twist more, which is of great value to training each part of the body and has a positive effect on the health of the body. Studies have shown that regularly participating in Yanhe dance has a good effect on the blood lipid and immune function of middle-aged women, which can effectively reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease and improve body resistance. Therefore, Yanhe dance not only has entertainment function, but also has good fitness function [5].

With the development of The Times, the development of Yanhe dance gradually evolved from inheritance to creation. Among them, The Yanhe Dance of Yi Nationality is based on the folk cigarette box dance of Jianshui and Shiping, with significant innovation. With Yilong Lake as the background and the theme of harvest celebration, deformation, processing, group dance and two-people dance are introduced to show a happy harvest. On the basis of the routine of "three-step twisting" and "dou ti ke",

the dance work Old Man incorporates such difficult movements and characteristic props as “long worm twisting waist” and “immortal building bridge”. The newly created “A nest of Birds” is improved on the basis of the traditional Yanhe dance, so that the innovated “a nest of birds” not only retains the folk dance style, but also conforms to the aesthetic taste of modern people. The “Yanhe dance aerobics” launched by Kunming Elderly Activity Center also incorporates modern disco rhythm on the basis of traditional Yanhe dance, making the traditional Yanhe dance harmonize with contemporary aesthetic consciousness and spirit of The Times, and integrate with social psychology and trend of The Times.

### 3.2 The Enlightenment Value of Yanhe Dance

The development and inheritance of the Yanhe dance is permeated with the rich traditional cultural thoughts of the Yi people. The Yanhe dance, which has been handed down from ancient times, has 72 major keys. For instance "treading on grain seed", "Turning over size", "fairy picking peach" and other performances deduce People's Daily life fragments, which reflects the ecological culture and ecological ethics connotation of harmonious society and conservation-type society, human beings should live in harmony with nature and respect the power of natural life so that they can acquire material from nature. Therefore, the Yanhe dance, like other arts, edify and educate the soul in the process of pleasure [1]. The performance of some routines in the Yanhe dance is accompanied by lyrics, which are about advising gambling and abstaining from drug addiction, which have significant enlightenment value.

In ancient times, the Yi people had the custom of eating "huocao tobacco", also known as "playground", which was a romantic place for young men and women to develop their relation. In Ming and Qing dynasties, arranged marriage was popular, which greatly restricted the freedom of marriage. Young men and women communicated with each other and loved each other through Yanhe dance. Therefore, in essence, the "playground" where people eat "huocao cigarette" is a place to educate the young generation about love and marriage [6]. For example, "pigeon's crossing food" is the routine of love. In the performance, two people's hands fly backward like pigeons, face to face, like big pigeons feeding small pigeons, while standing on tiptoe, while kneeling to feed, which expresses the meaning of love.

### 3.3 The Humanistic Inheritance Value of Yanhe Dance

The inheritance of culture is also the inheritance of history from a certain level, so the spread of Yanhe dance is also the inheritance of traditional Yi culture. Yanhe dance is often combined with folk activities of Yi people. On traditional festivals such as Torch Festival, Tiao Gong Festival and Double Sixth Festival, people rush to open areas to express their emotions with Yanhe dance. Since the Yanhe dance originated from the work and recreation in the fields, it contains many work postures. It enables people to accept traditional culture and national spirit in entertainment and realizes the inheritance of Yi

culture. Actions in production and life, such as threshing, weeding and cutting wood, are fully manifested in the Yanhe dance. Yanhe dance not only reflects the original life of the Yi people, but also vividly spreads the knowledge of production and life.

Hunting plays a very important role in the life of the ancient Yi people, and many movements in the Yanhe dance also come from this, for instance “fish fighting for water”, “wild dogs chasing deer”. The elegance and variety of these dance movements on the modern stage have been passed down from generation to generation in Yi culture, realizing the inheritance of survival skills, although hunting no longer occupies the first place in modern Yi people's life.

Sports are not the work of human making use of physical strength for material production, nor is it the survival competition or body game of animals. It is a body movement mode designed by human beings for free development, which has humanistic attributes in essence [7]. As one of the traditional sports of ethnic minorities, Yanhe dance has gradually lost its social and cultural value in today's society, but its economic value is increasing. Yanhe dance has gained great popularity since it appeared on the national and international stage. It attracts people from all over the country, improving the economic value of tourism. As it has been selected as a national intangible cultural heritage, this treasure should be passed down by future generations

### 3.4 The Sports Value of Cigarette Box Dance from a Global Perspective

Today's society has realized globalization at many levels, such as economic globalization and cultural globalization, and has entered the era of industrialization and information technology. Western culture including sports culture has brought a great impact on Chinese culture, and the development of Chinese traditional national sports is also facing difficulties. The cultural environment of Yanhe dance has changed greatly with the change of times, and the traditional custom of “eating huao cigarette” no longer exists. Lured by economic interests, many teenagers have gone out for non-farming job, and the inheritance of Yanhe dance is in danger of dying out. However, with the advent of the new era, countries all over the world pay increasing attention to the development of traditional national culture, the development of traditional national sports also ushered in the spring. Although competitive sports still occupy a dominant position at present, the national government has formulated many policies to respond to the development of cultural diversity, so as to meet the needs of the diversified development of sports culture at present.

In the future, China will develop into a sports power, which needs more diversified sports culture foundation, and the traditional national sports culture is one of them. Exploring the traditional national sports culture and enhancing the soft power of culture is fundamental. Yanhe dance inherits traditional Yi sports culture, which is a beautiful flower in minority sports. With the development and innovation, it

embodies the cultural heritage, the emphasis on physical and mental pleasure and entertainment performance are in line with the pursuit and aesthetic of modern society. At present, China is making great efforts to develop mass sports and enhance national physique. The fitness and entertainment value of Yanhe dance is in line with people's physical and mental needs. As a traditional sports activity in China, Yanhe dance will make an important contribution to modern society and the progress of world's sports culture.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Yanhe dance originated from sacrifice. Through the sacrificial ceremony, the purpose of Yanhe dance is on the one hand to pray for the gods' protection and help, eliminating disasters and blessings, and on the other hand, to apologize to the animals they killed. Some scholars also believe that Yanhe dance originated from military or labor life. Yanhe dance is characterized by "soft, tough, crisp" body movements, which requires dancers to have a high physical quality. The traditional culture thought of Yi nationality contained in the Yanhe dance has significant educational value. Through traditional festivals, field work and entertainment, the Yi culture is inherited. As a traditional sport of Yi nationality, Yanhe dance is an important channel for the inheritance of Yi nationality's traditional culture. The value of fitness and entertainment, education and humanistic inheritance that it embodies is particularly important in the development of the Present era. In today's diversified development of economic and cultural globalization, China must excavate and carry forward the value of national traditional sports culture and make it a powerful driving force for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation in order to achieve diversified development and realize the dream of becoming a sports power.

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