

# Study on the Cultural Value Recognition of Ethnic Groups and Rural Sports Activities —— Analysis Based on Traditional Dragon Boat Racing Ceremony

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**Abstract:** *Under the significant changes in the global landscape, diverse collisions are inevitable. Whether or not traditional Chinese sports culture is correctly recognized concerns national decline, public sentiment, and national division. Therefore, it is particularly important to integrate multiple cultures under the same perspective and follow one's own path of sports culture. This paper takes the dragon boat racing ceremony as an example to analyze the value recognition of rural sports activities with a long history. It concludes that in the historical development of rural sports activities, ethnic cultural order has been highly compatible with these activities in both form and spirit, achieving coexistence in the same spatial domain and forming value recognition. In the new era, innovative measures taken under social changes can not only enhance people's cultural confidence and identity but also provide strong theoretical support for strengthening the sense of community among the Chinese nation.*

**Keywords:** *Local Ethnic Group, Cultural Identity, Rural Sports, Dragon Boat Racing Ceremony*

## 1. Introduction

On March 5, 2021, The fourth session of the 13th National People's Congress: "Cultural identity is the deepest form of recognition, the root of ethnic unity, and the soul of ethnic harmony." In this unprecedented great transformation of the new era, the excellent traditional Chinese culture must be better inherited and recognized. The "Book of Rites: The Operation of Rituals" mentions: "When the great way is practiced, the world is held in common." The "Spring and Autumn Annals of Mr. Lu" also states: "The world does not belong to one person; it belongs to all under heaven." Kang Youwei's "Book of Great Unity" and Sun Yat-sen's promotion of the "Three Principles of the People" were both influenced by the idea of "the world held in common" —— the concept of Great Unity. Therefore, analyzing the cultural value recognition of rural sports activities is a necessity for the new era.

## 2. The symbiotic examination of local ethnic consciousness and rural sports activities

### 2.1 The fit between local ethnic groups and rural traditional sports

Taking the traditional Chinese sports project dragon boat as an example, rural sports activities with long history of storage are not isolated in the cultural space. Without integration, inclusiveness and communication, dragon boat activities cannot be passed down to this day, so there is no gap in value recognition.

Ethnic groups are the oldest forms of human civilization and social organizational structures. Weber believed: "Physical types, ethnic cultures, shared subjective beliefs, and collective memory are essential prerequisites for constituting an entire ethnic group. These prerequisites are more crucial in the continuity of non-kinship communities, which are referred to as ethnic groups"<sup>[1]</sup>. Ethnic societies deeply integrate dragon boat racing into their culture. Initially, the ethnic group used ordinary small boats, which were used for religious rituals, ancestor worship, disease prevention, and other spiritual activities, similar to sacred and solemn ritual cultures. The dragon boat competition ceremony, through authoritative norms left by ancient sages, fosters common values within the ethnic group. To enhance the authority and credibility of the identity system, the ethnic group has infused the development of dragon boats with "dragon symbols"<sup>[2]</sup>, which are imaginary realities formed from fabricated stories by the ruling class in ancient times, serving as objects of blessing and auspiciousness. To broaden the ethnic boundaries and

strengthen the prestige of value recognition, the ethnic group makes the fabricated imagination more convincing. The better one knows about the dragon boat project, the more persuasive the fabricated stories become. The value of dragon boats is widely recognized in group interactions, stimulating the rapid expansion of ethnic cultural boundaries. Despite changes in politics and geography over the long-term development of the ethnic group, dragon boats continue to be recognized and passed down in Chinese traditional culture. They possess a nature of exorcism and purification, radiating strong spiritual and cultural carrier values, embodying the beautiful aspirations and spiritual attachments of the local ethnic group.

## ***2.2 The social needs of the community in the social function of dragon boat ceremony performance***

The functions of ethnic culture in dragon boat ceremony performances exhibit diversity. In the old society, government power had limited influence on remote areas, and ethnic cultural strength supplemented the ruling power of the old society. First, the old social system and structure were primarily based on agrarian economy, which determined that the means of interaction between ethnic groups were limited. Ethnic exchanges relied on competitive physical activities or dragon boat ceremonies, where dragon boats played a significant role in rural areas. This inevitably led to conflicts among ethnic groups, but different ethnic groups still retained sports that could trigger violent conflicts, explaining similar events through the "dual social functions." The positive function of ethnic society is embodied in dragon boat sports, where members of the same ethnic group elevate their spiritual culture through physical competition and cooperation. On one hand, this injects a strong adhesive into the internal community; on the other hand, it exposes the negative function of ethnic society, where internal collective unity can lead to division among external ethnic groups. However, the positive function of ethnic groups in dragon boat ceremonies is weakened while the negative function is strengthened.

The second, The construction of ethnic groups is closely related to shared memories, which build trust between non-relatives. The essence of dragon boat racing ceremonies lies in the emotional expression and spiritual attachment of the masses. Ethnic groups use these races to convey emotional values, internalizing them as individual behavioral norms through common values and worldviews. Under social needs, ethnic groups establish regional order, achieving harmonious coexistence among villages. This leads to the second social function of ethnic groups in dragon boat ceremony performances: exerting intense social control over individuals. Foucault argues: "Space is an alternative space, a human-made space constructed by power, a means by which power institutions control the masses."<sup>[3]</sup> For example, at school entry ceremonies, students read the school motto collectively in a specific ritual space, where they are disciplined, a process that has educational value and promotes the core socialist values. Social stability requires order, especially the concrete activities of old social orders. Performance ceremonies do not rely on money; they concentrate efforts over a short period to hold these ceremonies, demonstrating the power of order.

Accordingly, the stable development of ethnic order meets the needs of society, and the dragon boat race ceremony serves as a carrier. The dragon boat race ceremony under the ethnic order is not only a leisure activity, but also a kind of life, a carnival life under the national order.

## **3. Examination of the value recognition and inheritance motivation of traditional dragon boat for rural sports activities**

### ***3.1 Grasping the value recognition of rural sports activities***

Building a shared spiritual home for the Chinese nation is evident in the worldview, order perspective, and values of the Communist Party of China, aligning with the aspirations of the broad masses of the people and guiding the direction of world civilization<sup>[4]</sup>. How to strengthen the community of consciousness is crucial. A gap in spiritual culture has emerged among the population, strongly influenced by Western culture. Young people appear to favor direct violence and more visually appealing sports activities, but in reality, they accept these without choice.

Chinese civilization possesses a unique concept of "great unity." As a product of long-term practice by the Chinese nation, "great unity" is inherently destined to be characterized by cultural diversity and unity. Dragon boat culture should continuously innovate to align with contemporary recognition. First, innovation lies in methods. Most innovations in methods focus on promotional and educational approaches. Promoting dragon boat culture should not be monolithic; it should target young people, who are curious and need engaging content that can compete at the level of "soft power." Second, the focus

of educational methods is on the individual. Traditional educational methods often overlook the emotions of the learners and their aspirations for the future, which can stifle interest and lead to self-destructive outcomes. Innovative education should aim to attract and provide targeted instruction, paying attention to other aspects of student development while refining the core cultural message through softer educational methods. Second, the innovation lies in the intrinsic innovation of dragon boat culture itself, adhering to the principles of rectifying the root and setting direction. Innovations include the format of dragon boat events, the scope of participation, and non-competition period planning. First, starting with the format, which refers to the competition format and ceremonial format. The competition format should not entirely follow past methods, such as two dragon boats racing on a river, where teams gradually approach each other during the race, with people from one boat jumping onto the opponent's boat to pull them into the water. This process involves too many uncontrollable factors; rules must prioritize human safety and serve people, with safety being the top priority. Therefore, the innovation in format should align with competitive sports, focusing more on speed, with time as the key competitive metric over equal distances. Dragon boats have significant advantages. First, they have their own worship rituals, bringing everyone together in a shared spiritual home, achieving consensus at the spiritual level. Second, dragon boat racing is a traditional Chinese sport with established experience and a well-developed system, which will certainly proceed smoothly under government coordination.

### ***3.2 Rural sports activities inherit the core power***

Light body and apply, integrate body and function. The core driving force of inheritance keeps the Chinese nation vibrant and innovative, constantly returning to its roots while embracing new developments. The Chinese nation has continuously achieved new successes in economic development and cultural construction<sup>[5]</sup>. Inheritance is a phenomenon where ethnic groups recognize cultural values and pass on the spiritual essence to the next generation, preserving the cultural spirit intact. However, the times can erase what predecessors deemed valuable, so it is essential to consolidate the foundation and nurture the essence for effective inheritance. Dragon boat racing ceremonies are practical activities that integrate faith, lifestyle paradigms, and consciousness culture. Ultimately, they reflect the intrinsic needs of social development based on people's simple motivations. The core driving force of inheritance lies in the educational impact of rituals, as the saying goes, "Without proper conduct, even good deeds are in vain." No matter how striking or varied the ritual culture may be, if it does not align with social customs and moral standards, it will eventually be eliminated by the flow of history.<sup>[6]</sup> Dragon boat racing ceremonies must ensure the dissemination of socialist core values, which is not only an important part of the ceremony but also one of the purposes of holding such ceremonies.

The core driving force of rural sports activities embodies two categories<sup>[7]</sup>: direct and indirect forces. Direct forces refer to the broad collective or narrow individual efforts that promote the cultural inheritance of rural sports activities, with the driving actions directly occurring in the culture of rural sports activities. Indirect forces, on the other hand, involve exerting influence indirectly through certain media or means on the culture of rural sports activities.

Direct dynamics are divided into cultural dynamics and sage dynamics. The shared beliefs formed through long-term survival strategies serve as the foundational driving force for the cultural inheritance of rural sports activities. The earliest traces of rural sports culture can be traced back to human hunting and farming, reflecting the inherent qualities of rural sports culture that constantly radiate truth, goodness, and beauty. The survival strategies of ethnic groups have nurtured rural sports culture, which is deeply rooted in these survival strategies. Dragon boats possess exorcistic properties; ethnic rituals pray for favorable weather and harvests, and some regions even build temples for worship, highlighting the dependence of rural sports culture on the survival strategies of ethnic groups. The definition of sage dynamics, based on Marx's materialist conception of history, refers to key figures who play a crucial role in the construction and development of rural sports culture within a certain period. The masses are the embodiment of social production and creators of spiritual wealth; they are the creators of rural sports culture. Although the importance of the masses cannot be overlooked, we must not neglect the critical role that sages play in rural sports culture. We should pay attention to the symbiotic structure of cultural value dynamics and the pivotal role of sage dynamics.

Indirect dynamics include political, economic, military, and technological development. Political dynamics involve policy implementation, relying on coercive means, with the shortest cycle, and the most noticeable effects after policies are delegated. Economic dynamics rely on social capital operations, which have cycles and relatively mild methods, thus their short-term implementation results are not ideal. Military and technological development belong to special types of dynamics that need to be triggered under specific circumstances. Military forces are ruthless, destroying sovereignty and cultural values

during wars. From the above perspective, political and economic dynamics form the core components of the internal indirect dynamics of cultural value recognition.

#### **4. Deepening the recognition of the cultural value of ethnic group consciousness and traditional dragon boat racing performance ceremony**

##### ***4.1 Common root cultural spirit***

Root culture is the unique genetic lineage of the Chinese nation, serving as the pillar that sustains cultural value recognition. In the old society, thoughts were in a state of "mystification" [8], where the clan believed that deities governed natural phenomena and sought to "plead" through sacrificial rituals. The entire process was simple-minded, with reverence for nature intertwined with an urge to conquer it—this is the underlying tone of root culture. Today, people acknowledge their own ignorance more than ever before, which signifies the arrival of an era of exploration. Secular culture has emerged one after another, and the religious world has immediately disintegrated. Weber's analysis of rational modernity, particularly the "rationalization of world images," indicates that this is a thorough social secularization. Modern informatization has led to a situation where only those who do not want to know cannot be ignorant. Root culture is gradually becoming secular, and its products are merely empty shells without substance. How can we achieve a common lineage?

Since science has transformed the root culture, scientific products should carry the consciousness of a community with shared values in the root culture. Fromm's perspective reflects that "in a healthy moral society, computers can only be controlled by human will as technical means." Marcuse argues that in a technologically humanized society, technology must be subordinate to culture, and in a humanized technological society, technology and culture coexist harmoniously. the concept of technological humanization effectively addresses the secularization of rural sports activities. In the modern technological society, traditional root culture urgently needs new ideas and methods to address the crisis of "difficulty in recognition." Postmodernist concepts provide innovative inspiration for strengthening cultural value recognition. If we can reasonably and efficiently apply them, we can smoothly advance the spirit of root culture.

##### ***4.2 Build a historical view of dragon boat culture***

History is beyond the way, but it is within the way, so the key point to deepen the value recognition is the construction of the historical view of local ethnic groups. Rural sports culture construction relies on historical and cultural awareness, carried out with the assistance of ethnic groups. China is composed of multiple ethnicities, and diversity within unity is a prominent feature of our country. Diversity is both a factor and a driving force for unity, dialectically unified [9]. By combining the specific conditions of rural areas, ethnic groups can explore commonalities through the popularization of individual histories, guiding each group to align with the center, correct their historical status, and prioritize innovation over adherence. Through long-term theoretical cultivation and practical exploration, young people in rural areas are encouraged to engage in hands-on practice, reflection, and insight, which helps establish a core consciousness of historical awareness among ethnic groups. [10] The dragon boat racing ceremony and performance history system strengthens the connection between local ethnic groups, truly achieving continuity and change over adherence.

##### ***4.3 Emotional attachment to dragon boat under social change***

The interwoven society is an important initiative proposed by China to promote interaction, exchange, and integration among all ethnic groups. In a stable society composed of various ethnic groups, guiding their integration and spontaneous mutual tolerance is essential. Integration and tolerance are not simply piecemeal; fundamentally, they mean "you in me, me in you." Early dragon boat activities exhibited strong alienation, but through the government's intervention based on the concept of an interwoven society, unified multi-ethnic village dragon boat performance ceremonies have been organized, enhancing individuals' sense of belonging in social changes and generating extensive social interactions. This broad social interaction provides endless impetus for rural revitalization, planning, and development.

China emphasizes "returning to one's roots," even as rationalization occurs during the modernization of rural areas. Individuals, through participation in ritual performances and spiritual elevation in a changing society, engage in cultural root-seeking activities. Under government intervention and guidance

from rural communities, and with the influence of rural sports activities, they base their actions on the excellent traditional Chinese culture, guided by socialist core values and community consciousness as the main ideological thread. Ultimately, this leads to an emotional return that is more socially dependent.<sup>[11]</sup> The social and cultural structure formed is not a traditional top-down linear development but rather an internal-to-external developmental process, achieving a multi-dimensional integration and acceptance of the emotional value of dragon boat culture in a changing society.

## 5. Conclusion and reflection

Based on the analysis of traditional dragon boat racing ceremony, the cultural value recognition of rural sports activities can be concluded as follows.

First, at the structural level, an interwoven society is mainly established under the intervention of the government. The government takes the lead, and the ethnic groups assist each other. The stable order of rural sports activities is jointly maintained by the combination of government order and local order. The cultural order of ethnic boundaries is the spiritual basis of ethnic identity and an indispensable factor in cultural inheritance.

Second, in terms of spiritual and cultural aspects, we should strengthen the emphasis on "root culture," grasp the carriers of rural sports culture in the new era, and fully leverage the optimal value inherent in rural sports activities. We need to deeply explore the commonalities and unique characteristics of historical and cultural elements in rural sports activities, widely popularize historical origins, foster historical awareness and cultural confidence, and skillfully utilize both the common and distinctive cultural features to attract more people to "trace their roots and find kinship."

The development of rural culture must maintain appropriate economic incentives, seek a balance point, and find an "interstitial reconciliation" between cultural stimulation and capital stimulation in the "intersubjectivity" generated by both, achieving cultural reconstruction. In China's development process, moral norms and cultural exports have served as the core hub of dragon boat racing performance rituals. Although there have been dynamic adjustments in inheritance and change, the core subject has not changed and may even have been strengthened. Rural sports activities continuously reconstruct their culture through ethnic boundary cultural order, social changes, inheritance, and development, demonstrating a spiritual and emotional return to the public good.

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