

CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

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Dragon Dance in Tu Village: Social Cohesion and Symbolic Warfare

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Abstract:

China has a rich heritage of “folk sports”: traditional dance, processions and parades, games, martial arts, and acrobatics. Unfortunately, in the wake of social reforms designed to “modernize” the nation in the mid-20th century and the growing popularity of international sports, opportunities to document many of the folk sports in context may have been lost. In certain cases, however, reconstruction of the traditional contexts of folk sports in ritual, festival, or similar cultural enactments is possible. In such cases, we can attempt to understand their original social functions to create cohesion, articulate social conflict, mark boundaries, etc. This article considers the case of the Dragon Dance as performed during Spring Festival at Tu Village in Southeastern China. We argue that beyond the ancestral function of this folk sport as festival symbol, the dance serves as a vehicle for articulating territorial disputes between neighboring villages, a variety of surrogate warfare. The following article applies folkloristics, economic, political and symbolic anthropology to interpret the historic functions of the Dragon Dance complex and to illuminate general theories about the interconnections among the performed world and the social world.

China has a rich heritage of “folk sports”: traditional dance, processions and parades, games, martial arts, and acrobatics. Unfortunately, in the wake of social reforms designed to modernize the nation in the mid-20th century and the growing popularity of international sports, opportunities to document many of the folk sports in context may have been lost. Therefore, “survivors” are categorized strictly as athletic events in disregard of their traditional contexts in ritual, festival, or similar cultural enactments and their original social functions such as cohesion, initiation, or boundary marking. In certain cases, however, reconstruction of the traditional contexts of folk sports is possible. In such cases, we can attempt to understand their original social functions in indigenous societies. This article considers the case of the Dragon Dance as performed prior to the mid-twentieth century

during Spring Festival at Tu Village in Nanchang County, Southeastern China. We argue that beyond the ancestral function of this folk sport as a festival symbol of group cohesion and social obligations, the dance served as a vehicle for articulating territorial disputes between neighboring villages, making it a variety of surrogate warfare. In addition, Tu Dragon Dance is compared to folk sports in other cultures that in spite of profound differences serve similar functions of creating social cohesion, establishing territorial boundaries, and settling inter-group disputes by means of ritualized conflict rather than war. The following article applies folkloristics, economic, political and symbolic anthropology to interpret the historic functions of the Dragon Dance complex and to illuminate general theories about the interconnections among the performed world and the social world.

Henry Glassie's classic study of Irish folk drama *All Silver and No Brass* (1975) confronts a similar research problem requiring cultural reconstruction and serves as the inspiration for many of the following comments. Like Glassie's mummers play of Ballymenone, Ireland, the Dragon Dance of Tu Village is a lapsed tradition that lives only in the memories of the community's oldest residents. Both entail dramatic representations — a hero combat in the Irish example and a rampant dragon in China — that are performed serially in prescribed locations, thereby defining “home territory.” Moreover, both are embedded in festivals marking seasonal transition in historically agrarian communities. Despite drastically different cultural settings, we intend to demonstrate similar functions for these two festival performances and for the Native American stick ball game that was the ancestor of modern lacrosse.

Fieldwork

In the attempt to reconstruct the original context and functions of the Tu Village Dragon Dance, Tu Chuan-fe interviewed Tu Village elders focusing on those who formerly comprised the rural elite. The field work was carried out from August of 2008 to the April of 2009. Additional information was drawn from the *Jia Pu* (“genealogical record”) of *the Tu Family* and *Jia Pu of the Bao Family* and the Nanchang County Annals. The following description of the Dragon Dance and related activities is a composite image of the performances as retained in the collective memory of village elders. In its general features, the Tu Village Dragon Dance is typical of the dance as performed throughout South China in conjunction with Spring Festival (known as Chinese New Year in the West).

Tu Village

Tu Village lies in Jiangxi Province in Southeastern China. Due to the geographic location and resulting climate, the natural conditions of Tu Village are very suitable to the cultivation of a variety of crops.

The agricultural production of Tu Village during the period under consideration, from the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) to the Land Reform (in 1950 to 1952), was relatively simple; the villagers counted on a single crop of rice during the cultivation periods. At this point, rice production was relatively low. Access to water for irrigation was crucial to the villagers' survival, and ultimately led to a dispute with neighboring Deng Village over

access to lakes that were claimed by both. There were three categories of farmland in Tu Village: the temple fields, the private fields, and the fields available for renting. The temple fields lay behind the temple devoted to Yangsi, a local ancestral deity, and were rented to farmers who guarded the temple. The fees collected were spent on the public utilities of Tu Village. Almost every family in the village had some private fields. Most of these were small, and most farmers had barely enough rice for their own consumption. A small number of families, however, had more rice paddies, and there were a large number of paddy fields to rent. In addition, the villagers had an ancestral craft, the manufacture of rice-flour noodles. However, the work was very hard indeed. When households were too busy to make enough noodles as planned, lineage relatives and in-laws would be asked for help.

The villagers traditionally worshipped local gods and their ancestors. The Yangsi Temple was used as the communal temple for the veneration of the three village gods: Yangsi, Lieshi, and Xianli. In addition, the villagers with the Surnames of Tu and of Bao each dedicated temples to their lineage ancestors. For practical purposes, however, the villagers regard the Tu lineage and the Bao lineage as a single family because of ancestral intermarriage. Consequently, the villagers surnamed Tu went to the temple belonging to the Baos after they worshiped their own ancestors in the Tus' temple. Some of the older villagers recall that prior to the founding of the Peoples' Republic of China (1949) there was a shrine as well as a memorial tablet engraved with the names of their ancestors in every household that served as a means for venerating their ancestors at home. On the first day and the fifteenth day of the lunar month and on festival occasions, traditional villages often first worshiped the gods in their own living room and then went to the village temples for communal worship. Thus the ritual conventions and routes that the village came to follow gradually evolved. First the villagers worshipped the gods in their own family, then they went to the temple dedicated to the Tu family, and then to the temple belonging to the Bao temple, and finally to the Yangsi Temple. The villagers continue to follow this ritual route during major festivals.

During the historical period under consideration, owing to their relative prosperity the residents of Tu Village had access to a higher level of cultural entertainment than did the neighboring villages. Folk festivals provided the primary forms of entertainment for all villages. Of the diversions carried out during the folk festivals, dragon dancing, which was performed during the annual Lantern Festival, was regarded throughout the region as

being the most lively. Neighboring villagers rushed to Tu village for the festival activities.

The Dragon Dance of Tu Village

The Dragon Dance in Tu Village was one of the customs associated with the Lantern Festival marking the fifteenth day of the Chinese Lunar New Year. The fifteenth day of the month is the first night of the new year during which a full moon is visible. This celebration officially ends the Chinese New Year celebrations. According to folk historical accounts, because of the relative prosperity of Tu Village, it became the local cultural center during Lantern Festival. The Dragon Dance is the highlight of the events held during these celebrations.

Prior to 1949 and subsequent efforts to modernize the nation by abolishing what were considered the vestiges of feudalism, the Dragon Dance in Tu Village incorporated rich sacrificial rites, to the local deities (the so-called “cults”)¹ and to the lineage ancestors. On the thirteenth day of the first month of Chinese Lunar Year (January)², the villagers went to the village temple to offer sacrifices to their patron deities. During the day of the Dragon Dance, the ensemble who would perform the dance went to all the temples to burn incense sticks for the deities’ blessing. Also, during the three days from the thirteenth to the fifteenth day of the Lunar Year, every family offered sacrifices to both the gods and their own ancestors in their own houses. The custom continues to the present day. On the morning of the sixteenth day³, villagers went to offer sacrifices to the cults again, in order to thank give the gods for their protection and to ask for future blessings.

The Dragon Dance itself was a component of a procession incorporating both the dragon “lantern” proper and “moving cults.” The dragon

lanterns were considered the core of the event, and the cult images carried in the procession were secondary or supplementary. The great dragon lantern was a composite structure made up of nine separate lanterns assembled into the shape of a Chinese dragon. Villagers wove the skeletons of the lanterns with bamboo battens, and then pasted white *Qingming* paper⁴ onto the framework. The paper was elaborately decorated with complex and colorful drawings. The dragon head was particularly sophisticated, with vividly painted horns, mouth, eyes, and beard. The dragon body was cylinder-shaped while the dragon tail was shaped into a fishtail. The lanterns were connected by silk cloth. There were candle lamps in each of the lanterns, and handles were fixed to each. During the performance, a ball made of colorful silk cloth was held in front of the dragon, and the dancers manipulated the dragon effigy to respond to the ball as if provoked and attracted by it.

The “moving cults” following the dragon dances were the village deities carried in three bridal sedans. The statues of the three cults were carried in a fixed order. Yangshi was in the vanguard, Lieshi followed, and Xianli brought up the rear.

In Tu Village, the lineage organization, consisting of prestigious and reasonable male elders, was the supreme body responsible for the proper conduct of the Dragon Dance. This group formulated policy and arbitrated social disputes. Throughout the year, the lineage organization was the de facto regulatory authority of civil affairs. Because the lineage organization maintained authority over both daily affairs and communal festive events, the Dragon Dance during this historical period was, to some extent, an “officially designated” activity. Although the lineage organization was the regulatory body, the work of the festival was managed by the “host” of each year’s Dragon Dance.

In Tu Village, a rotating system of festival management developed based on the prestige of lineages (“family names”) and on the individual’s seniority in the clan. The prestige of family names was determined by the historical depth of the lineage in Tu village. Historically, the population of some Chinese villages consists of families sharing a single surname. Tu Village is one of these clan villages; however, it is inhabited by families bearing one of three surnames: Tu, Bao and Li. The Tu family established the village, thus giving the village its name. Subsequently, the Tu were joined by

¹ The term cult is synonymous with “god” in the literature. Traditionally, most villages had their own cults. In the scholarship, researchers often call them “territorial cults”. In Tu Village, the villagers worshiped “Yangshi”, “Lieshi”, and “Xianli”. The deities were represented by statues wearing helmets and paludaments and bearing weapons in their hands. Normally, they were placed in the village temple (*Yangsi* temple) and sat on the altar. Tu Villagers believed that the cults could protect the village and bring good luck to all residents. Therefore, every family and the patriarch of Tu village worshiped them on 1st and 15th of every lunar month as well as during the important festivals, such as Chinese Lunar Year, Midautumn Festival, and Dragon Boat Festival, among others.

² The day before the Dragon Dance.

³ The day after the Dragon Dance was over.

⁴ This is a type of paper burned on *Qingming* (the Chinese Tomb-sweeping Festival). The festival takes place in the spring and consists of sweeping the tombs of one’s ancestors and offering small gifts at the site.

the ancestors of the Bao. The last arrivals were surnamed Li.

As a result of the Tu family having the longest history in the village, the role of Dragon Dance host rotates in turn first to the Tu family, then to the Bao family, and last, the Li family. After which, the role of host then returns to a member of the Tu family. This rotating system conformed to Chinese traditional morality in terms of respect for elders. Since every year only one family was eligible to host the Dragon Dance, the cycle was quite long. Regrettably, the head of a household, the man who would be eligible to serve as the “host” of the dance, might pass away before his turn as host. Fortunately, his son could inherit the honor. If the deceased had more than one son, each son waited for his own turn based on age, too.

Before 1949, the expenses of a Dragon Dance were covered by revenues drawn from the collective estate of Tu Village. This included revenue from the collective mountain and temple land from which pine trees were harvested and sold every ten years. This income was collectively owned. Also, the temple land was rented out to the villager who guarded the village temple, and this income was collectively owned as well. The Dragon Dance constituted the major village expenditure each year. According to interviews conducted with the elderly villagers, the revenues of the collective estate typically not only covered the expenses of public affairs, but provided a surplus. Therefore, villagers experienced no anxiety concerning their ability to fund the annual Dragon Dance performance. Nevertheless, sometimes the host donated money as a symbol of his generosity or his family's piety. After all, the role of host was a once in a lifetime chance to attain the social prestige that accrued to sponsoring the Dragon Dance. Therefore, each host fervently hoped to offer better hospitality than his predecessors and better entertainment for visiting spectators than at dances held on other years. Sharing a similar desire to display their wealth and devotion to the cults publicly, the local landlords also tended to be generous and assist in sponsoring the dance. While far from the aggressive contention displayed by the Dragon Dancers confrontation of Deng Village discussed below, this indicates the potential of the festival to establish hierarchy and provide a venue assuming a dominant role in the village.

The Dragon Dance in Tu Village was an annual collective ritual activity which required the mobilization of all forces of the village. It represented a “focused gathering,” as Erving Goffman called events during which participants maintain a common concentration of attention on a significant ongoing activity (144-145). As a result,

all villagers became linked to each other by the agency of the dance. The event, in anthropologist Robert J. Smith's terms, provides an “occasion for people to rejoice together — interact in an ambience of acceptance and conviviality” [1975: 9]. This interaction generates the positive feelings which lead, in turn, to the cohesion that bonds individuals together as a community allied against any potential threat.

In fact, the ways in which the Dragon Dance bonded individuals into a collective extended beyond to Tu Village. The Dragon Dancers traveled to neighboring Zhao Village to perform, which incorporated inhabitants of Zhao Village as participants. As a result, a social bond was created between the residents of the two villages. Moreover, all families invited their in-laws to join in the festivities. In this way, in-laws and neighbors were mobilized into a network to create a successful festival and potentially to join in other cooperative endeavors outside the performed world.

Much of the responsibility for the social mobilization required for the Dragon Dance and its corollary activities fell to the village lineage organization discussed above. As the cultural authorities regarding the proper conduct of the Dragon Dance, the lineage elders of Tu Village led Dragon Dance events, undertook “diplomatic” exchanges with Zhao Village, and handled emergencies during the festival. Although the host was in charge of assigning specific duties, he could seek help from the elders as needed.

Besides the host, the majority of middle-aged men were absorbed in the activity, also. For example, dancers were drawn from their ranks. Since dragon dancing is physically demanding, a group of middle-aged men usually followed the active Dragon Dancers closely to replace exhausted dancers whenever necessary.

Tradition stipulated that only unmarried men were eligible to carry the bridal sedans bearing the images, the “moving cults” that accompanied the dragon dancers. Therefore, a reserve unit of bachelors followed the sedans to replace exhausted carriers as needed. More than just an obligation, it was the common hope of both unmarried men and their parents that they could obtain blessings by carrying the village deities. In addition, old people, women, children and visitors were involved in the Dragon Dance as spectators. Yet, it should be emphasized that they were not mere observers. Rather, they served as witnesses whose presence validated the social hierarchies played out in the festival enactments.

In this festival hierarchy the established males in the community stood at the center of greatest

intensity. The host's central role as organizer and "master of ceremonies" has been described above as has the role of the lineage organizations. The remaining elders and middle-aged men insured the proper conduct of the events both by dancing and by providing an on-going critique. Males on the margins of the community--young, unmarried men in a liminal state between childhood and established adulthood--carried the sedan chairs of the village cult figures. While remaining ancillary, lower status roles, bachelors were involved in a primary ceremonial event of the community as a first step in rising up the patriarchal hierarchy. Symbolically, the festival mobilization dramatized the traditional social structure: a patriarchal society in which men were the decision-makers and held positions of power and prestige and had the power to define reality and common situations, family lineages maintained differing ranks, and each lineage maintained an internal hierarchy based on age.

When not in use for the festival, the props for the Dragon Dance were preserved in the village's ancestral hall⁵. On the thirteenth day of Spring Festival, villagers began to prepare for the Dragon Dance. Although variations on the general pattern occurred from year to year, as is the case with festivals cross-culturally, the general the order of events as follows.

After breakfast, villagers assembled at the village temple where the Patriarch burned incense sticks to the village deities. Then, every family sent a representative to the village temple to burn incense sticks. Following this homage to the gods, the village cults were welcomed to the bridal sedans and carried to the ancestral hall. Next, auxiliary equipment for the Dragon Dance was repaired, and related props such as firecrackers, candles, and lamps were obtained. Finally, the Dragon Dance was drilled roughly in front of the ancestral hall.⁶ Only preparation work was done on this day.

On the evening of the fourteenth day, the Dragon Dancers performed in neighboring Zhao Village with which Tu Village maintained the

relationship known as "Share *Shehuo*"⁷. Prior to this performance, on the afternoon of the fourteenth, all the equipment and props utilized for the dragon lantern and the moving cults were stored in the host's house. After supper, Tu villagers gathered in the host's house, waiting for the departure of the procession consisting of the officials in charge of the performances, the dragon dancers, the bearers of the deities' images, and attendant personnel for Zhao Village. The village cannon, *Huochong*⁸, was fired three times in front of the host's house. Then, the procession set out for Zhao Village which lay to the south of Tu village.

The group left through the gate adjacent to the Tu family temple, first stopping to perform the Dragon Dance in front of the temple. Then, *Huochong* was fired three times again, and the elders offered sacrifices to their ancestors. Then, firecrackers were set off, and *Huochong* was fired a final three times to conclude the performance at the Tu family temple. Their next stop was Yangsi Temple, where they repeated the same actions performed at the Tu family temple. Finally, the group arrived at the juncture of Tu Village and Zhao Village, where the Zhao village temple stood. At this temple, the Tu dragon dancers set off firecrackers and repeated the actions that had been performed at the two previous stops. On their arrival, the delegation from Tu Village was welcomed by elders from Zhao Village who presented gifts to the group on behalf of their village. Typical gifts were wine, pancakes, pork, firecrackers, and, sometimes, a red envelope containing money. The group then entered the village from the south gate. Guided by the Zhao village elders, the dragon dancers staged performances at locations in Zhao Village along the established traditional route. Again, lineage prestige and historical connection with the village location dictates the order of performance. Thus, the dragon dance was first performed before the families with surname of Zhao and in the order of relative prestige within that lineage. Then, performances were held at the various residences of members of the Li family.

⁵ This was the building erected by the Tu family as a demonstration of filial piety. Tablets with the names of deceased male family members were housed in this hall, and during important cultural occasions such as weddings or festivals a lineage convened in its ancestral hall.

⁶ The general procedures and patterns of the Dragon Dance were maintained strictly from year to year, but the concrete actions embodied within individual dragon dance performances varied within these traditional aesthetic criteria. As a general festival principle Smith notes, "Each year's festival is novel though its structure remains the same" [1975: 9].

⁷ *Shehuo* are folk performances rooted in traditional agricultural rites dedicated to the deities of earth and fire. Villages who venerated the same cults were said to share *Shehuo* by cooperating to stage performances ranging from the acrobatic to the dramatic.

⁸ Although treated as a personal noun in this context, a *huochong* (literally "fire gun") is the general term for a tubular firearm. The metal (bronze) *huochong* dates to the late 13th-early 14th century and is widely regarded as the first cannon [Sun 2003]. The Tu village *huochong* was constructed by the residents of the village.

As soon as the group arrived at front of a residence, the family acknowledged their arrival by setting off firecrackers, and the performance continued until the firecrackers burned up. Usually, each family prepared refreshments for the dancers and spectators, and presented gifts (mainly food or a red envelope containing money) to the group of dragon dancers⁹. After the performances for the evening were completed, the visiting group exited from the gate closest to Tu village.

On the way home, they stopped in front of the temple of the Bao family where the elders offered sacrifices, firecrackers were set off, the Dragon Dance was performed, and *Huochong* was fired three times. Finally, the group returned to the house of the "host." This act marked the conclusion of performances on the fourteenth day of the festival.

The next day, the Dragon Dance was performed only in Tu Village. By staging the final performances of the dance in their home village, the performers assert the importance of their village relative to their neighbors. The initial procedures were the same as the night before. The Dragon Dancers performed in order: in front of the temple of the Tu family, at Yangsi Temple in the north, and at the temple of the Bao family in the south. This route effectively circled the village, marking Tu territory. Next, the group began their residential performances, moving from house to house, beginning with families in the Tu lineage and proceeding to residences of the Bao and Li families, geographically linking the members of the households who were linked by lineage and social convention.

When the circuit of village performances was completed, the procession left the village and proceeded to the location of two lakes the ownership of which had been the source of longstanding conflict between Tu Village and neighboring Deng Village. When the Tu Village Dragon Dancers arrived at the lakeside, they fired *Huochong* three times to open their performance. At the conclusion of the dance the cannon was again fired three times. In this case, the performance was not performed for Deng Village so much as "hurled" at it in an assertion of the dancer's traditional claim and a demonstration of the physical prowess needed to defend that claim.

On the morning of the sixteenth of Lunar January, Tu Villagers carried the images three village deities back to the village temple in bridal sedans. The elders burned incense sticks to the

gods for fulfillment of their vows on behalf of the village, and every family sent a representative to burn incense sticks to the cults for fulfillment of their own vows. This formally concluded the Dragon Dance activities in Tu Village for the year.

Consistent with festival practice cross-culturally, private domestic ceremonies were corollary to the performance of the Dragon Dance of Tu Village. Every family offered sacrifices to the deities and ancestors in the parlor of its own house. The veneration of lineage ancestors within the residences of the living as distinct from temples was a means of high-lighting the bonds of kinship. Villagers invited their in-laws to come to watch the Dragon Dance. As noted above, this group could be called on to provide labor when necessary. The dragon dance and the hospitality related to lunar new year can be regarded as a gift every family Tu Village presented to its in-laws, a means of reciprocating for services rendered. In addition, the importance of the family was emphasized by the restriction of social life during this period which allowed for intensified interactions with one's in-laws. Just as festival events encourage community cohesion, these family customs create bonds within the smaller more basic units of the village-families.

Antagonism and Rivalry in Cross-Cultural Perspective

Dragon Dance offered a venue for men to display their strength and, consequently, the strength of their village. Before 1949 and the land reforms mentioned above, Tu Village and Deng Village constantly fought for the ownership of the two lakes at their juncture. The performance of the Dragon Dance by the men of Tu village demonstrated the prosperity of the village and the solidarity among the villagers to Deng Village. This was reinforced antagonistically by performing the dance in close proximity to and within sight of the latter. As a result, the Tu Dragon Dance not only fostered and reproduced the friendly relations in Tu Village and among relevant outsiders such as the villagers' in-laws and the Zhao villagers, it also maintained and reinforced competitive and antagonistic relations between Tu and Deng. The competition originally grew from the fact that the subsistence of the region was based on rice cultivation, an enterprise that is water-intensive. Therefore, it was not hard to understand why the two villages were always in a tense and antagonistic relation over this limited resource. Of course, Tu Village would never go to Deng Village to perform the Dragon Dance, let alone intermarry with Deng Villagers. Roger

⁹ This collection of small offerings from hosts following ensemble performances is common in the world's seasonal peripatetic traditions. British Isles mumming, Christmas caroling, and U.S "trick or treating" serve as examples.

Abrahams points out that festival (and folklore in general) is commonly performed not only to generate social cohesion for the in-group, but in order to intensify the feelings of separateness and articulate and maintain tension and antagonisms between competing communities (1981). The Tu Dragon Dance performed at the margins of Deng Village vividly illustrates Abrahams' contention, and by its symbolic "saber rattling" avoids the use of real sabers to settle the conflict. The use of folk sport as symbolic warfare is widely distributed as the following examples illustrate.

In his detailed history of lacrosse and the Native American stick ball games that were its ancestors, Donald Fisher writes, "The constant running, rough play, and stick skills needed to play the game conditioned men for combat" [2002: 13]. Among the tribes who had developed inter-tribal Confederacies the game permitted tribes to "reinforce political fellowships while solving territorial disputes." It is not surprising that those groups who maintained the strongest confederacies, the "Five Civilized Tribes" of the Southeastern region and the Iroquois League of the Northeast had the most vital stickball traditions (2002, 14-15). In spite of important cultural differences, these Native American horticulturalists like the Tu Village farmers maintained forms of folk sport, that like real warfare, were permeated with religious ritual and supernatural significance. This strategy of using folk sport as a surrogate for war that worked for Tu Village was not always so successful among Native Americans, however. Thomas Vennum records that a lacrosse game between the Creek and the Choctaw tribes over a beaver pond in Mississippi eventually ended in a fight in which 500 men were killed [1994: 115].

As depicted in the documentary "Trobriand Cricket: An Ingenious Response to Colonialism" [Leach, Kildea 1973] an effort to civilize the indigenous population of the Kiriwina Islands (formerly the Trobriands) and supplant war with sport was launched in the early 20th Century. As the title suggests, British missionaries sought to replace highly ritualized warfare with the highly codified sport of cricket. The Trobrianders soon modified the British game by donning traditional battle dress, singing war chants during games, and incorporating traditional rituals designed to magically empower the bat. All elements associated with competitive sport were expunged from the adapted style of play. The winner (always the host team) is predetermined and victors hold a feast afterward in the losing team's honor. This shows off the home chief's wealth, magic, and generosity. Trobriand Cricket minimizes sporting prowess in

favor of preserving *Kayasa* (ritualized warfare) without the violence of the indigenous prototype [Ascencio 2011]. Interestingly, the indigenous population survived by subsistence horticulture as did the Irish mummers, the Native American stick ball players, and the Tu Village Dragon Dancers. Therefore, the use of folk sport as surrogate warfare may be worthy of further investigation

Festival as Social Education in Traditional Chinese Society

Ernest Gellner holds that in traditional societies, education of the individual is achieved primarily within the context of community life, as distinct from the more formal means that prevail within contemporary industrial and post-industrial societies [2006: 87]. Consistent with this general pattern, folk traditions, such as the Dragon Dance served educational functions in Tu Village.

The Dragon Dance was an act of religious devotion, a gift to the deities and to the ancestors whose images were prominently displayed during the Spring Festival processions. Closer examination reveals a variety of secular functions as well. Regarding gifts, Marcel Mauss writes that "the lasting effects of...exchanged gifts, as a symbol of social life, directly represented the means by which subgroups in archaic society were brought together" [1970: 62]. Dragon Dance in Tu Village, as a "gift" offered to the village cults and ancestors by living villagers, symbolized the bond established through the villagers' worship of a shared set of deities and their collective respect for their common ancestors. The dance united the separate families, strengthened Tu Villagers' universal recognition of a "community of faith" and a "kindred community", and promoted the awareness of rural regional identity. In addition, the Dragon Dance in Tu Village was a "gift" presented to in-laws in the intermarriage area and to the friendly neighbor, Zhao Village. In the exchange and flow of this gift, the universal recognition of "regional community" was strengthened among significant others defined by area of residence and kinship. The hostility of this gift directed to Deng Village is highlighted in contrast. Folklorist Henry Glassie argues for a similar marking of community and creation of regional cohesion in the traveling dramatic performances held during the Christmas season festivities in historical rural Ireland [1975: 122-124]. Even more to the point, Glassie reports that ritualized fighting was integral to the tradition. These conflicts ranged from the mock sword battles between characters representing Irish heroes and those playing outsider roles to rule-governed

"faction fights" in which real blows were exchanged [1975: 134].

Psychologically, these individuals and the groups they comprised were able to share positive experiences in the presentation of the Dragon Dance, which, on one hand, promoted an emotional response (a sense of accomplishment and family honor) and on the other hand, addressed participants at an intellectual level by reaffirming the morality of social solidarity, the historical role of prominent village families, and human relationships to the supernatural. In this fashion, the Tu Dragon Dance festivities demonstrate Robert Smith's contention that festivals have both affective (emotional) and cognitive (intellectual) dimensions. As Smith writes, "While much festival behavior is purely cognitive, a great deal of it seems to have as its purpose the evoking of an affective response" [1975: 7].

Victor Turner characterizes ritual as a "social drama" which consists of three stages: a movement from structure to anti-structure and ultimately a return to structure. At the beginning of the ritual, participants are arranged in strict accordance with their social positions in everyday life so that the ritual conforms to the values and norms of the "structure". During the peak of the ritual, the social positions of participants gradually disappear; distinctions between them are temporarily eliminated, and they become a community. At the peak of the festival (Lantern Night), "we" (Tu Villagers) confront our traditional enemies (Deng Villagers) via the Dragon Dance. Because the confrontation is merely symbolic, after the festival, participants' social positions and original roles in everyday life are resumed with peace and order undisturbed. [1995: 176].

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Taniec smoka w wiosce Tu: spójność społeczna a symboliczna walka

Słowa kluczowe: sporty ludowe, Chiny, antropologia symboliczna, festiwal, folklor

Streszczenie

Chiny mają bogate dziedzictwo „sportów ludowych”. Niestety, w wyniku reform społecznych mających na celu „modernizację” narodu w połowie XX wieku i rosnącej popularności międzynarodowych sportów, możliwość udokumentowania wielu sportów ludowych mogła zostać utracona. W niektórych przypadkach rekonstrukcja tradycyjnych kontekstów sportów ludowych, festiwałów lub innych podobnych wydarzeń kulturalnych jest możliwa. W takich przypadkach, możemy próbować zrozumieć ich pierwotne funkcje społeczne mające na celu tworzenie spójności, artykułowanie konfliktów społecznych, wyznaczanie granic itd. Artykuł rozważa przypadek Tańca Smoka (*Dragon Dance*) wykonywanego podczas Świąta Wiosny w miejscowości Tu w południowo-wschodniej części Chin. Autorzy uważają, że poza dziedziczną funkcją tego sportu ludowego jako symbolu święta, taniec służy jako sposób dla wyrażenia sporów terytorialnych między okolicznymi wsiami i stanowi rodzaj zastępczej wojny. Wioska Tu leży w prowincji Jiangxi w południowo-wschodnich Chinach. Produkcja rolna od czasów dynastii Ming (1368-1644) do reformy rolnej (1950-1952) była tu stosunkowo prosta - mieszkańcy utrzymywali się z uprawy ryżu; dostęp do wody do nawadniania był kluczowy dla przetrwania. Dostęp do wody z jeziora, gdzie znajdowało się także miejsce kultu, doprowadził do sporu z sąsiednią wioską Deng. Taniec Smoka w wiosce Tu był jednym ze zwyczajów związanych z *Lantern Festival* - świętem obchodzonym piętnastego dnia chińskiego Nowego Roku Księżycowego. Taniec Smoka sam był elementem procesji zawierającej zarówno „latarnię” w kształcie smoka jak i „ruchomych bożków”. Obrzędy związane

z tym świętem wymagały zaangażowania i mobilizacji całej społeczności wiejskiej. Interakcja ta generowała pozytywne uczucia, które prowadziły z kolei do spójności i poczucia jedności mieszkańców wioski sprzymierzonej przeciwko wszelkim potencjalnym zagrożeniom.

Każdy z mieszkańców, w zależności od wieku i stanu zamożności miał wyznaczone zadania. W wymiarze symbolicznym obchody święta przedstawiały strukturę społeczną wioski, a także konflikt między sąsiednimi wsiami. Taniec Smoka oferował

możliwość pokazania siły społeczności lokalnej np. poprzez symboliczne „grzechotanie mieczami”.

Podobne sposoby pokojowego rozwiązania konfliktów poprzez sport znane były także w innych krajach.

Konfrontacja była tylko symboliczna, więc po obchodach święta społeczne pozycje uczestników i oryginalne role w życiu codziennym zostawały wznowione wraz ze spokojem i porządkiem.