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The conflicts in modernization of wushu – By the case of Japanese Wushu Taijiquan Federation oppose the *Rules for Wushu Taolu Competition*

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Abstract

Background and Study Aim: Wushu Taolu (武術套路) means the routine performance in competitive Chinese martial arts. In 2003, the International Wushu Federation (IWUF) published the new version of Rules for Wushu Taolu Competition. The new rules approve difficulty and add music in performance, just like rhythmic gymnastics. Japanese Wushu Taijiquan Federation (JWTF), the second influential member in IWUF, insist the new rules raised the risk of injury and cannot be sufficiently represented the feature of wushu.

Material and Methods: This study analyzed related material including the official journal published by JWTF, main changes of the new rule, and the details of the proposed amendment draft by JWTF.

Results: JWTF disagree with the new rules in contents of difficulty. In back of this opposition lies that JWTF attaching importance to the combative aspect of martial arts.

Conclusions: The conflict of modernization of Wushu Taolu exists in the relationship of combative aspect and aesthetic aspect of martial arts. Japanese association solves this conflict by dividing Taolu into two parts: the Olympic style of Taolu and the original style of Taolu. But this kind of solution needs further researches.

Keywords: aesthetics • body performance • globalization • localization

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INTRODUCTION

Wushu (武術) means Chinese martial arts. It is mainly divided into two parts, the traditional Chinese martial arts and the newly or modern Chinese martial arts [1,2]. Newly or modern Chinese martial arts also known as the competitive Chinese martial arts, it consists of Sanshou (Chinese boxing or Chinese kicking boxing) [1] and Taolu (the routine performance). Compared to Sanshou, Taolu pays more attention on the body performance (the aesthetic aspect of martial arts) instead of practical combat (the combative aspect of martial arts).

Currently, the International Wushu Federation (hereafter “IWUF”)[3] has 146 members. Among the member countries, Japanese Wushu Taijiquan Federation (hereafter “JWTF”)[4] was established in 1987. It is second influential member following China in IWUF.

This study aims to analyze the conflict exist in the modernization of Wushu, especially Taolu. The way from traditional ethnical sport to the modern competitive sport can be understand as the modernization. Taolu appears as a competitive sport since 1959 when the first *Wushu Taolu Competition rule* was published. There were 8 times that the rules of Taolu have changes [5,6]. The biggest change made in recent year was in 2003. In that year, the IWUF published a new version of rules, the *Rules for Wushu Taolu Competition* (hereafter “the new rule”). But JWTF insist the new rules raised the risk of injury and cannot be sufficiently represented the feature of Wushu.

Based on these facts, this study wants to reveal the conflicts in modernization of Wushu through analyzing the changes of Wushu’s rule and the altitude of Japanese association. The study aims to solve the following two questions: (1) the main changes in the new rule from the former rules; (2) how and why JWTF opposed the new rule.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This is a historical research based on the related documents and materials. In order to reveal the question (1), the study summarizes the related papers and analyzes the rules published after 1959. As for question (2), this study analyzes the official journal published by JWTF, and the details of the proposed amendment draft by JWTF.

RESULT

1. The main changes of the new rule.

After the first *Wushu Taolu Competition rule* was

published in 1959, this rule was revised in 1960, 1973, 1979, 1984, 1991, 1996 and 2003. Table 1 shows the main changes of each version of rules.

Table 1. Main changes of rule of Wushu Taolu (1959-2003)

Year	Main changes
1959	Decided the competition events; The evaluation method (full score is 10 points); The amount of movements of each event (each performance should have 50-60 movements); Set the upper limit of performance time (105-150 seconds); Set the standard of some movements;
1960	Divided the man and women event; Set the detail of scoring (deduct 0.1-0.2 points for minor mistake, 0.3-0.5 points for obvious mistake, 0.6-1 points for severe mistake);
1973	Add bonus points when competitor complete the new movement or difficulty; Set the lower limit of performance time (80 seconds);
1979	Cancel the bonus points for difficulty; Unified the term and points in evaluation; The apparatus should be checked before performance;
1984	Add some competition events; Limit the size and weight of apparatus; Deduct the points if performance include the vulgar movements; The national competition should set camera to record competitor’s performance;
1991	Change deduction points of minor mistake from 0.1 to 0.05; Allow two decimal places appear in the score. The second decimal places should be “0” or “5”.
1996	Divided the full 10 points into several parts: evaluation of quality of movements (6.8 points); evaluation of overall performance (3 points); there are 3-5 referee responsible for each part. Add the point for innovated movements (0.2 points); Listing the detail of the mistake and deduction criteria of quality of movements and overall performance.
2003	Add the part of evaluation of difficulty. Simplify the deduction criteria for mistake in performance. Change the point of each part: evaluation of quality of movements (5 points); evaluation of overall performance (3 points); evaluation of degree of difficulty ¹ (1.4 points for the “Difficult movements”. 0.6 points for “Difficult connections”); Allow the competitor to choose the music (conducted to melodies without words) to match their choreography. Add the contents of anti-doping test.

The early rules (published in 1959, 1960) mainly decided the general contents of competition. Most of the contents are abolished in today’s rule. But some

1. Evaluation of degree of difficulty divided into two parts: “Difficult movements” (1.4 points) and “Difficult connections” (0.6 points). The points of “Difficult movements” are added when competitor completes the movements with acrobatic technique like jump and spin. There are three classes in the “Difficult movements”, A (+0.2); B (+0.3); C (+0.4). The points of “Difficult connections” is added when competitor complete two or more “Difficult movements” continuously. There are four classes in the “Difficult connections”, A (+0.05); B (+0.1); C (+0.15); D (+0.2).

of the contents are still used, such as the full score is still 10 points. In 1973, the rule adds bonus points to encourage competitor to perform new or difficult movements. But this change let meaningless or dancing movements appearing in Taolu and drew some criticism. Therefore, the bonus points for difficulty were canceled in 1979. The version published in 1979, 1984 and 1991 focus on the limitation of apparatus and the evaluation system. In 1990, Wushu became one of the events of the Asian Games aims. Therefore the more objective judging system was needed in the development of Taolu competition.

The huge changes made in the version published in 1996 and 2003. In prior version of rule, one referee should judge the competitor's whole score. The final score of competitor is the average of each referee. But since 1996. The final score were divided into several parts and each part responses by special referees. In 2003, *the new rule* adds the part of evaluation of difficulty and clearly defined the standard of the difficulty clearly. Obviously, these kinds of changes improve the objectivity of Taolu competition.

But every coin has two sides. *The new rule* does make the evaluation of Taolu competition more objective. But it also drives Taolu, as a kind of martial arts lose its combative aspect and draw some criticism and opposition from the member of IWUF like Japan.

2. The opposition of JWTF

In 18th-20th July 2003, JWTF invited Chinese Martial Arts Delegation to Japan to demonstrate their routine performances. The situation of the final day was recorded on the official website of JWTF (<http://www.jwtf.or.jp/taichi/taichi02.html>).

"The performances of the delegation are just as what we worried about. Each performer focused on the difficulty, which leads the result that the original style of Wushu was losing."

JWTF did a survey immediately on that day (20th July 2003) to the audience and Japanese competitors about whether you agree with this kind of difficulty added in Taolu or not. As the result, 2020 votes are against the new changes while only 332 people agree with that. JWTF showed this result to the IWUF and Chinese Wushu Association (hereafter "CWA") and applied to modify the new rule.

In December 2003, the 10th IWUF technical committee was held in Macau, in order to manipulate *the new rule*. In the committee agree with the following terms:

- 1) Increase the amount of difficulty, especially the amount of easier difficulty;
- 2) Increase the point of "Difficult connections";
- 3) Increase the amount of "Difficult connections" in Taiji quan;
- 4) Add flexibility to the referee operation with computer, in order to meet the various competitions.
- 5) The throw and catch apparatus is not belongs to "must do" movements, therefore it can't be deleted from *the new rule*;
- 6) Competitor have right to choose add music with performance or not.

CWA was responsible for modifying *the new rule* after 10th IWUF technical committee. CWA proposed a modified version in late December. Although the modified version of *the new rule* solved some issues on above, there are still some problems lefts. Such as, modified version added some easier difficulty in Chang quan, but as for Taiji quan and Nan quan there are no changes. What's more, the point of "Difficult connections" is also not increased.

JWTF beliefs these unsolved problems related to the foundation of *the new rule*. It will infect the future development of Taolu. Because there is a large disparity exists in the technique level of each athlete of country and area. Most of the foreign athletes can't complete the high classes difficulty (C or D of "Difficult connections" or C of "Difficult movements"), therefore it will lead the result that most countries can't participate the 2005 world championship in Moscow.

In considering of these facts, JWTF applied to hold 11th IWUF technical committee as soon as possible. In February 2004, the committee was held in Beijing and JWTF proposed an amendment draft with four main proposals [7]:

- 1) Only allow to use A and B classes of "Difficult movements" in 2005 world championship;
- 2) Increase 0.05 point of each classes of "Difficult connections" (A=0.1; B=0.15; C=0.2; D=0.25);
- 3) Increase the amount of difficulty in Taiji quan and Nan quan (JWTF even designed the movements of difficulty and attached picture and description).

4) Delete the dangerous and unreasonable movements.

The committee totally accept the 1) and 2) terms of JWTF's amendment. About term 3), the committee agreed to add 2 "Difficult movements" and 5 "Difficult connections" into Taijiquan. For Nan quan, 3 "Difficult connections" was added. Also, some movements was changed its classes. For term 4), JWTF proposed to delete 5 dangerous or unreasonable movements. As the result, the committee finally did not delete these movements but modified the description or reduce the classes of these movements.

As the result, most of proposals of JWTF were accepted. Ishihara (2004), a member of the IWUF technical committee, wrote in JWTF's official journal:

The new rule was provided with the appropriate content for the Olympic, but it lays particular stress on the difficulty. If this phenomenon goes on, Taolu will become the gymnastics and will impede the development of Taolu.

From now on (Japanese proposals was accepted by IWUF) in Japan, Wushu will divide into the Olympic style and the original style. From my point of view, since the Olympic style of Wushu was created, the evaluation of original style should be reconsidered. Also the standard of evaluation of original style should emphasize characteristic and traditional style of each event. The Olympic style aims to the high technical performance. On the other hand, the original style aims to recover the traditional techniques.

DISCUSSION

Like figure skating or rhythmic gymnastics, Taolu belongs to evaluation sports [8]. Since Taolu is an evaluation sports, the final score is related on the performance of competitor. Before *the new rule* was published, competitors are able to pay more attention on their performance. They will also have enough energy to think how to perform better by using body through traditional Wushu techniques. Those Wushu techniques are abstracted from practical combat and organized by Chinese thinking of beauty. Although such Wushu techniques may not be able to used in practical combat, they come from practical combat directly.

Adding difficulty and stressing the body performance (even accompany with music) means IWUF value the aesthetic aspect of Wushu. This is a big step for Taolu to becoming the modern competitive sports. Because by doing this, the process of evaluation will be more

precise and objective. But the problem is the movements like jump and spin are useless in practical combat. And it is hard to say such acrobatic movements have close relationship with traditional Wushu techniques. Competitors have to spend much time and energy that originally used for shaping performance to practice difficulty.

In other words, *the new rule* drives Wushu far away from traditional Wushu techniques. It weakens the combative aspect of Wushu and shaped Taolu into a new kind of martial arts. This may be why the JWTF said the original style of Wushu was losing.

Taolu has several aspects. Two of them are aesthetic aspect and combative aspect. If Taolu focus on stressing the aesthetic aspect then the combative aspect will be weaken. While if Taolu focus on combative aspect, then it is hard for referee to evaluate competitor through the performance objectively. JWTF opposed the new rule because they worried that Taolu will lose its original style. But the amendment draft proposed by JWTF did not deny adding difficulty into the Taolu, and even request for increase the amount of difficulty. Why does this happen?

From Ishihara's saying, it is easy to find that the JWTF's way to solving the dilemma is to divided Taolu into two parts: The Olympic style and the original style. This seems to be a good idea. But what this author worried is, the original styles of Taolu will "degeneration" under the wave of modernization. Most of the sport events want to become official Olympic events. Competing with each other under the same situation (the same rules) can be a strong motivation for practitioner. The original style of Taolu is more depends on the experiences and personal aesthetic of a referee. Therefore, the evaluation of the original style is relatively lacks of objectivity. Thinking in this way, the changes in *the new rule* is not made by IWUF deliberately, but pushed by the wave of modernization.

Another interesting things is the original style of Taolu is not leaded by Chinese (CWA) but by Japanese (JWTF). Sogawa in 2004 said [9], International sport is leaded by the international society, which is beyond the country and ethnic group. The goal of international sport is global understanding and world peace. While on the other hand, the ethnic sports are leaded by the ethnic group. The goal of ethnic sport is brew the identity of the ethnic group. The Olympic style of Taolu can be classified as international sport, and the original style of Taolu can be classified as ethnic sport. That means the identity of Chinese ethnic group

is not shaped by their own but another ethnic group (Japan or JWTF) through Wushu Taolu. How can we evaluate such phenomenon?

Future researches should focus on whether we should divide Taolu in two ways (the Olympic style of Taolu and the original style of Taolu). If we should, how can we develop both of them. If we shouldn't, then what we have to do?

CONCLUSION

The conflict of modernization of Wushu Taolu exists in the relationship of combative aspect and aesthetic aspect of martial arts.

Japanese association solves this conflict by dividing Taolu into two parts: the Olympic style of Taolu and the original style of Taolu. But this kind of solution needs further researches.

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