



A Study on Bullfighting Culture in Congjiang County

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Abstract

This article examines bullfighting and its associated culture in Congjiang County, Guizhou Province, as a case study. It highlights the unique characteristics of bullfighting culture in this region and explores its contemporary significance. Research indicates that the bullfighting culture in Congjiang County demonstrates a strong sense of collective consciousness, serving as a vital link between communities and reflecting the people's reverence for fertility, pursuit of harmony, and desire for honor. The conclusion of this article asserts that the bullfighting culture in Congjiang County has a rich history and represents a shared spiritual heritage among all ethnic groups, playing a crucial role in their interactions. Therefore, safeguarding the traditional culture of this ethnic group can preserve the ancient collective memories of various communities, enrich social lives, and promote harmony and stability across regions.

Keywords

Congjiang County; Bullfighting Culture; Collective Consciousness

1. Introduction

Congjiang County is home to ethnic groups such as Miao, Dong, Shui, Yao, Zhuang, Buyi, etc. It is a typical ethnic minority settlement area, and communication between ethnic groups often occurs. So, what is the unique connotation of the bullfighting culture in Congjiang County, and how does it connect the communication between different ethnic groups? Regarding the study of bullfighting culture, Li Tao believes that there is a possibility of homology between Guizhou bullfighting and Jinhua bullfighting; Chen Guoan, Ge Gaosheng, and others believe that the industrial development of bullfighting culture can not only inherit ethnic culture, but also create economic benefits; Yang Changguo believes that the worship of bulls contains more permanent historical memories and national psychological consciousness, and has a complex symbolic role. The bullfighting culture in Congjiang County exhibits a strong sense of collective consciousness, which is an important link connecting the interior and between villages. It reflects people's worship of reproduction, pursuit of sound, and desire for honor. It is a spiritual wealth shared by all ethnic groups and plays an important role in their interactions.

2. The Origin of Bullfighting Culture in Congjiang County

Bullfighting has a long history in China (Wang Xiaohui & Dong Qiang, 2019). The bullfighting culture in Congjiang County has a long history, with records dating back to the Three Kingdoms period. According to the book "The Origin of Bullfighting and the Forty-eight Bull Farms" by Congjiang Gao Zeng and other places, in the late Eastern Han Dynasty, the Three Kingdoms were in power, and the eight sides engaged in chaos, leading to peasant uprisings. Kong Ming knew that this nation was inherently aggressive and feared that they would turn back in peace. In order to seek long-term peace, he came up with the idea of bullfighting and decided to let the bulls fight. As expected, he

won the favor of all ages. There is also a record in the story of the Miao people in Dong Lang Town, Congjiang County. It is said that during the Three Kingdoms period, Zhuge Liang led troops to the western part of Dong Lang Town and met the Miao people. Zhuge Liang understood that the Miao people were a rough and powerful ethnic group. In order to consolidate regional stability, Zhuge Liang decided to grant the Miao ethnic group a certain degree of autonomy, allowing them to freely graze bulls, fight, and play the reed-pipe wind instrument, allowing the Miao people to enjoy their own culture, so that no one would cause trouble. In commemoration of this event, people named the mountain where the story happened Kong Ming Mountain, which is also the origin of Kong Ming Mountain in the western part of Dong Lang Town. It is said that people had also dug up the helmets of soldiers carried by Zhuge Liang before.

3. Rich and Colorful Bullfighting Culture

There are two types of bullfighting in the world, one is Spanish bullfighting, and the other is bullfighting in southwestern China. The reason why the bullfighting activities in Congjiang County are different from other places is not only because of the large number of viewers but also because the bullfighting activities in Congjiang County have a strong sense of ceremony. Whenever the day of bullfighting comes, people from each village will spontaneously come to the bullring. Villages farther away will stay overnight at the bullring early, and the bullpen has become a city that never sleeps. The ox king from the village, wearing a custom-made iron horn, arrived at the bull pond with great fanfare. Some of the accompanying people were drumming, some were carrying flags, and some were holding ropes that pulled their feet. People will wrap a black cloth around the open space to prevent the two bulls from meeting. After the cattle are settled, the village will send representatives to carry flags and beat drums to the center of the cattle pond to pair with other villages. When the people from both villages discuss and successfully pair up, the people from both villages will make a "oh, oh, oh" sound, telling the people in the pond that a bull has successfully paired up. After all the pairing work is completed, a big battle is about to break out. Before the bull entered the field, representatives from each village on both sides crossed a branch in the center of the bull pond, indicating that the bullfighting was about to begin and unrelated individuals quickly evacuated. The bulls on one side first entered the cattle pond, carrying flags and beating drums as they walked ahead. Bullfighting enthusiasts from the whole village followed behind the bulls, making an "oh, oh, oh" sound to cheer them up. Only when the first party in the cattle pond is ready can the other party lead the cattle into the pond. If both bulls are colliding with each other, a black cloth will be pulled up in the middle to block the bull's line of sight, in order to prevent damage to the bull from being too far away from the collision distance. After the bull was pulled to the designated position by professional traction personnel, the professional gave a command to remove the black cloth. The sound of two bulls colliding instantly brought the atmosphere of the bull pond to a climax. In addition to watching bullfighting competitions, people can also visit relatives, hang out at home, and communicate emotions. Young men and women can also take this opportunity to travel (Xu Hong, 2020).

4. The Unique Connotation of Bullfighting Culture in Congjiang County

Gertz stated in "The Interpretation of Culture" that understanding a nation's culture is a manifestation of its normalcy without weakening its uniqueness. Placing them in their own daily systems will make them understandable. Their difficulties in understanding will disappear. Therefore, to understand the bullfighting culture in Congjiang County, we need to view it from their perspective in order to understand the unique connotations of bullfighting culture.

4.1 The Desire for Reproduction

In the bullfighting culture of Congjiang County, water buffalo represents men. Whenever someone gives birth to a child, people will ask whether they are giving birth to a guardian of a bull or a guardian of a duck; If the person returning is guarding the bull, the one born will be a boy, and the one guarding the duck will be a girl. In their dream interpretation, if someone leads a bull to their home, it means that the family will add a boy; If you dream that someone is going to lead or kill a bull, there is a high possibility that someone in your family or family will die. At the blind date scene, people will sing: Does your bull sell (does the girl get married or not)? Here they do not treat the water buffalo as a girl but place their hope for future fertility on this girl because the daughter-in-law can bring them more bulls (to have more children). Similarly, whenever an elderly person passes away, they will slaughter their cattle, symbolizing that the deceased has "descendants" to help with work in the underworld so that they can "be like

others" (other deceased elderly people). This mentality of "being like others" governs people's behavior. They kill bulls for the deceased, hoping that they can take them to the gathering place of their ancestors. They hope that bulls can "plow the land" for the deceased in the underworld so that the deceased in the underworld can "not worry about food or clothing" like "others". From the image of the bull, we find that the attire of the people from the river towards the bull is more like that of a woman, rather than representing the appearance of a man. We speculate that this image is a cultural relic of matrilineal society. In matrilineal societies, when men get married, they wear headbands (which may be animal feathers), collars around their necks, and wedding dresses. Their attire resembles the image of a bull king. After entering the patrilineal society, the object of marriage became a woman, and this image became the image of a woman. However, during the matrilineal society, the concept that the image of a bull corresponds to the image of a man was retained. So now we see the Bull King wearing a bull horn (the silver horn on a woman's head) and a bell (the silver collar on a woman's head), like a female image, but in fact, it is a male image from the matrilineal society. This also explains why the bull represents a man, while the decoration is like a girl's image.

4.2 The Battle for Honor

Dong bullfighting is not just a struggle between cows. Bullfighting is a collective sport, and during the bullfighting competition, a winning bull symbolizes the honor of the local village (Cao Meihong, Sun Liuzhong, & Li Huina, 2023). Bullfighting in Congjiang County is fundamentally different from bullfighting in other regions. Bullfighting in other regions is only a formal form of fighting, that is, pure animal fighting. However, the people of Congjiang have endowed bullfighting with more content. Through the bullfighting in Congjiang County, we can feel the anthropomorphic fighting beasts. Their bullfighting is more like a battle between villages, and this kind of battle is not like the bullfighting of the Nur people or the cockfighting of the Balinese people. The game only exists between men, and bullfighting in Congjiang County is a game between all members of the village. Therefore, the bullfighting culture in Congjiang County has a strong sense of collective consciousness and extreme respect for honor. The men in the village carefully take care of their bulls. They believe that the Bull King represents their image and quality. As long as their own Bull King beats the other Bull King, they believe that their image quality has defeated the image quality of the other man. That's why they crave victory and a better image. The men in the village often gather together to discuss their bulls, while the women discuss them while weaving and embroidering, with endless topics. The men in the village will bathe the bulls, take them to exercise, and feed them rice wine, and aphrodisiacs (they fight harder when they are in heat). In the bullfighting process, they not only have to win the opponent in battle but also do not want to be outdone in their voices. The competition for honor has turned bullfighting among the people of Congjiang into a game between villages. During bullfighting, if one bull catches the other's eye or locks the other's throat with its horns, the successful side will dance and make an "oh, oh, oh" sound on the bullpen to express their sense of conquest and honor. The people on the losing side are bleak, and this failure, watched by men from various villages, has increased their sense of shame and strengthened their determination to compete for the honor. So, after their Bull King loses the game, they will immediately buy a new Bull King to clear their shame. Their personalities are gradually formed in such an environment.

4.3 The Link of Village Life

Miao bullfighting attracts tourists with its mystery and rarity (Tang Zhongqin & Liu Yujiao, 2023). In the social life of ethnic minorities such as Miao, Dong, and Shui in Congjiang County, bulls play a role as a link, and their ox kings are the core of social organizations. For example, the Miao ethnic group in Ting Dong Town will have the participation of village elders in the selection and bullfighting process. The village elders endow the Bull King with divinity, and everyone must participate unconditionally in any activity related to the Bull King. The village elder grants the power of the ox god, but the ox's status is higher than that of the village elder. People in the village can have conflicts with the village elder and are allowed to use language to attack the village elder, but they cannot insult the ox king in any way, otherwise, they will be enemies with the entire village. If someone doesn't buy bulls, the people in the village will isolate them. Therefore, not joining the group buying Bull King means not being in the group. The Miao people in Congjiang County regard the village ox king as a drum, and their ox beating is also known as drum ox (Miao language means "Ni Niu"). The role played by drum ox and drum is the same, both of which are the bonds connecting the village collective. In their social life, few people ask which drum you are from, but more often they ask which drum bull you bought. Joining a group of drummers, everyone in the group has an obligation to help each other. The more drummers there are in a village, the more branches the family has. Therefore, with the continuous

growth of the population, families continue to branch and refine, and the Miao ethnic group has no written language, so they can only remember which ones are families and which ones are houses by jointly buying bulls. Using the drum ox to unite the people in the family, the big drum connects the village collective, and the drum ox serves as the small drum of the big drum in various branch families, so the drum ox has sacred significance. When some ethnic groups in Congjiang eat beef, they will call their relatives, and every time they eat beef, it is a big gathering among relatives. Eating beef has become a way to connect family members. On the one hand, it can awaken kinship relationships, and on the other hand, it can ensure that when relatives kill cattle, they can also eat it themselves, just like the Kula hoop, which is a relic of the original communal eating system in rural houses. From selecting bulls, bullfighting, and eating bulls, it is not difficult to see the mentality of the people of Congjiang who are afraid of leaving the group, because in a society where agriculture is the main way of livelihood, leaving the group means leaving productivity and also means extinction.

5. Conclusion

Ethnic culture is the soul of a nation, and traditional culture is the root of ethnic culture. The inheritance and protection of traditional culture are crucial for a nation (Chen Guoan & Ge Gaosheng, 2020). The bullfighting culture in Congjiang County has a long history and is a common cultural wealth of all ethnic groups, carrying the collective memory of all ethnic groups. Through bullfighting culture, we can see the production and lifestyle here, as well as the psychological characteristics of people. The bullfighting culture in Congjiang County presents its unique connotations and plays a certain role in shaping individual personalities. At the same time, the bullfighting culture in Congjiang County is not only about exciting bullfighting activities, but also has rich cultural connotations, reflecting people's desire for reproduction, pursuit of noise, and competition for honor, which are the bonds of village life. The bullfighting culture in Congjiang County has a strong collectivist plot, and various ethnic groups interact and exchange with each other in the bullfighting arena, which is of great significance for regional harmonious development.

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