

Development of Chinese Martial Arts: The Influence of Wuju System's Establishment in the Sui and Tang Dynasties

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Abstract: Wuju system, also known as Wuke, was began in Tang Dynasty, the second year when Wu Zetian became empress. However, it was abolished in the 27th year of Guangxu in Qing Dynasty and has lasted for more than 1,200 years. As one of the main ways to select martial arts talents in feudal China, it has had a profound impact on the development of martial arts. In Sui Dynasty, martial arts were prohibited, then, there emerged some informal systems to select martial arts talents. Wuju system was formed in Tang Dynasty, completed in Song Dynasty, developed in Ming Dynasty, finally abolished in Qing Dynasty. Even though, it improved the selection criteria for talents that are adept with both the pen and the sword. However, with the successive invasions of Western colonists, the traditional martial arts are clearly no longer suitable for the needs of modern warfare. The abolition of Wuju system caused a fierce debate in the imperial court, but it was finally abolished. Wuju system has had a positive impact on the development of martial arts, but at the same time, due to the limitations of itself, to some extent, it has slowed the developmental pace of martial arts. Therefore, we must absorb the essence and discard the dregs of Wuju system, studying it from different perspectives, drawing on the experience of the past and providing some references for the future development of martial arts.

Keywords: Sui and Tang Dynasties, Wuju System, Martial Arts Development

1. Introduction

The long history of the ancient China had witnessed rise and fall of various social systems. However, the imperial examination is an exception. From the very beginning, the imperial examination gave the country's scholars an equal opportunity to compete. From July of the 18th year of Emperor Wendi's reign in Sui dynasty, the imperial examinations began to operate. [1] Any change of the country, including dynastic changes, had little influence on the imperial examinations, making it exist in Chinese history for 1300 years. And it made a unique contribution to the institutional civilization. On this basis, Empress Wu reformed the imperial examination system, created the Wuju system to selected military talents. The Wuju system was founded in the second year of Wu Zhou Dynasty-a period of Tang Dynasty. A history book (*Xin tang shu· xuan ju zhi shang*) recorded it as followings: At the time of Empress Wu, Wuju was began (*Wu ju, gai qi qi yu wu hou zhi shi. Shi zhi wu ju.*). [2] Under the auspices of the Ministry of War, every year, imperial court

held the examination for all martial artists who are all around the country. And the person who passes the examination is awarded a military position. This is the official promulgation of the Wuju system. Since then, the Wuju examination has been inherited by most feudal dynasties and has become an important system for the feudal state to recruit talents. In the imperial examination system of China, Wuju system was set up for testing martial arts talents, which was formed as a relatively perfect system in the Song Dynasty. [3] Ming and Qing Dynasties inherited Wuju system of the Song Dynasty. [4] However, it was abolished in the 27th year of the Guangxu reign of Qing Dynasty (1903). [5] Wuju system lasted for 1200 years, second only to the time of the imperial examination system, and it has an important influence to the development of ancient Chinese society, especially martial arts. The prosperity of the Wuju system in the Tang Dynasty play a guiding role on the development of martial arts, especially the formation of the martial spirit in contemporary society and abandonment the old concept of "put intellectual pursuits above material arts".

To gain a new insight of Wuju system, the paper intends to introduce the establishment of it in the Sui and Tang Dynasties, and then to analyze the influence of Wuju system on Chinese martial arts.

2. The Establishment of the Wuju System in Tang Dynasty

The reasons why the Wuju system was established in the Tang Dynasty is that there are the perfect political system, developed economy and advanced culture in Tang Dynasty. [6] Politically, the founders of the Tang Dynasty paid great attention to the lessons of the demise of the Sui Dynasty and adopted a series of measures to consolidate politics: perfecting the three provinces and six ministries and the imperial examination system; rectifying the provincial military system, implementing the military recruitment system, and inheriting the various advanced systems of the Sui Dynasty and then making it more complete. These measures have greatly improved the political system of the Tang Dynasty, and thus effectively promoted the economic development. At that time, Tang Dynasty is in leading place in terms of politics, economy, and culture, also the center of world civilization.

Economically, the Tang Dynasty has a vast territory. Meanwhile, it was an era of national fusion and unification of the Han and ethnic minority people. At that time, the cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries are frequent. On the basis of inheriting the culture of the previous dynasties and absorbing foreign cultures, the people of all ethnic groups have jointly created a splendid culture. The country is strong and the economy is booming. The unification of the Tang Dynasty stabilized the social order of the country, which promoting the economic and cultural exchanges between the North and the South. The feudal economy is highly developed and the time for political stability is relatively long.

Culturally, the rulers of the Tang Dynasty advocated an open cultural policy. The government vigorously set up schools, broke through the restrictions on the selection of talents, constantly increased the number of examination subjects, and expanded the scope of assessment. In terms of ideology and culture, whether it is a foreign Buddhist culture or a Chinese Taoist culture, the rulers can all be eclectic. [7] The open-minded cultural policies have not only cultivated a large number of cultural talents, but also created a favorable atmosphere for cultural prosperity. Because politics is more open, the Tang Dynasty has a smooth traffic, especially the opening of the Silk Road.

The founders of the Tang Dynasty paid great attention to the lessons learned from the demise of the Sui Dynasty and adopted a series of measures to consolidate their rule: firstly, inheriting the various advanced systems from the Sui Dynasty and making them more complete. These measures have greatly improved the political system of the Tang Dynasty, promoted the economic development at that time, made the Tang Dynasty's leading position in politics, economy and culture in the world. Secondly, absorbing the foreign culture,

sovereigns in Tang Dynasty broke lots of restriction on talents selecting. The social stability, economic and cultural prosperity laid a firm material and cultural foundation for the emergence of the Wuju system. In the long historical period before the Tang Dynasty, a more mature method of selecting warriors has been established, which laid a methodological foundation for the formation of the Wuju system. [8] Wuju system, emerged in a specific social context, on which it was adapted to the military needs of the Tang Dynasty and ensured the security of the country. The selection of martial arts talents is a part of imperial examinations, which made the selection and appointment of military talents institutionalized and standardized.

During the Spring and Autumn Period, as well as the Warring States Period, military talents were valued. As the result, the earliest model of selecting military talents emerged. During this period, archery and force became two main criteria for the princes to select military talents. [9] From the Qin and Han Dynasties to the Sui Dynasty, according to country's needs, martial arts talents were mainly recommended by the court officials. [9] In this model of selection, many of the talents do not need to take special and standard examination. The establishment of the Wuju system changed these disorderly martial arts talent selection mechanism. The reason why the Wuju system was established in the Tang Dynasty is that Tang Dynasty has the perfect political system, developed economy and advanced culture.

3. Wuju System and the Development of Martial Arts

In the Tang Dynasty, martial arts examination was held once a year, and the time was relatively fixed. All people can take the martial arts examination, which broke the hereditary system, and opened up a new situation of "wide acceptance of the country's talents." [10] The general civilian candidates who passed the examination, must be posted firstly, and then awarded to the official position. However, identity of candidates and the training time are important when determining which official position they will award. The rulers of the Tang Dynasty are still inclined to select the talents from a family of official. Even though, the Wuju system of the Tang Dynasty still provides more opportunities for civilians than ever before, which inspired more people to learn martial arts. At that time, even the literati students can fence and shoot. Some scholars have pointed out that the majority of the literati in the Tang Dynasty were good at martial arts, for example, most of the famous poets in early and prosperous Tang dynasty experienced the life in desert and war front. In Tang Dynasty, the imperial court ruled that "if civil officials plead for military elections, they must be more than six feet in height, less than forty years old, strong and brave enough to rule over others" (Ruo wen li qiu wei wu xuan, qu shen gao liu chi yi shang, ji nian sis hi y xia, qiang yong ke yi tong ren zhe). [11] From this regulation, it can be found that after the establishment of the Wuju system, the phenomenon of the

literati giving up the pen and taking up the sword appeared. The literati of the Tang Dynasty enjoyed the martial arts, which swept away the gentle feminine spirit of the literati in former dynasties. It can be said that advocating martial arts is a historical progress, which embodied in the spirit of the times, also a vivid expression of prosperity of Tang Dynasty. In this social context, the establishment of the Wuju, which is on the track of imperial examinations, have made the selection and appointment of military talents institutionalized and standardized.

Because of the great development of martial arts, people in Tang Dynasty have abandoned the stereotypes of "put intellectual pursuits above material arts" of former dynasties. [12] The abandonment of this concept played a crucial guiding role to the development of martial arts. At that time, people think highly of decent martial arts and look down upon sinister ones. The Wuju system provided precedent opportunities for martial arts talents. It greatly influenced the stereotype of "put intellectual pursuits above material arts" and made the concept of "being adept with both the pen and the sword" renewed and became the standard for measuring martial arts talents. [13] In particular, Guo Ziyi, who took Wuju examination and became a famous general of Tang Dynasty, who improved the social status of "warrior" to a certain extent, and the phenomenon of literati scholars "abandoning the pen and taking up the sword" appeared. [14] As mentioned before, Wuju system has a positive impact on the formation of "advocating martial arts" ethos, which inevitably increased the emphasis on martial arts. Martial arts activities are increasingly valued and loved by people. In general, the establishment of the Wuju system in Tang Dynasty strongly promoted the formation and development of Chinese traditional sports-martial arts.

4. The Influence of Wuju System on the Development of Chinese Martial Arts

The Sui Dynasty is followed the Southern and Northern Dynasties, which was a turning point. After the Sui Dynasty, ancient China became a unified multi-ethnic country. The policies on the martial arts in the Sui Dynasty was mainly the prohibition of weapons and the selection of martial arts talents. [15] It is forbidden to hide and collect the weapons. At the same time, the rulers selected the martial arts talents according to their needs. Therefore, the Wuju system of the Tang Dynasty is informal in the Sui Dynasty. In the Sui Dynasty, the selections of martial are talents and ban on martial arts were acts of the government. The ban on martial arts was mainly a ban on civil martial arts, but the development of martial arts was not stopped. Before the Tang Dynasty, the country's selection of martial arts talents was mainly depending on the how strong these talents are. At the end of the primitive society, human beings did not have a strict distinction between production tools and weapons. Bows and sticks as production tools were also weapons in war. Wuju is one of the components of the imperial

examination system. Although it's not so developed as Wenju (civil official examination), and its influence on Chinese history is far less profound than it, but it is a necessary supplement to the imperial examination system. Without the Wuju system, the imperial examination system is incomplete. Therefore, the Wuju system not only occupies a place in the history of imperial examinations, but also goes beyond the imperial examinations. It is also one of the components of military, martial arts and educational history. It plays a role in cultivating and selecting military talents and promoting military martial arts.

The martial arts system of the dynasties is undoubtedly played a positive role in the development of martial arts. "Martial arts is as important as literature" and "government by civilians, and defense preparations by military talents" have always been regarded as creeds for the ancient rulers." [16] Shi Ji· Kong Zi She Jia (Historical Records·the biography of Confucius) records: "If there is a government ruled by civil official, there must be defense preparations by military talents, vice versa." [16] Han Fei Zi·Jie Lao records: "The country must have civil and military talents". [16] This positive thought of the history books has an important impact on the development of martial arts. The influence of the Wuju examination on traditional sports is as follows: the establishment of Wuju has created a precedent way of being official for martial arts talents; the Wuju examination has promoted vigorous development on folk martial arts activities; he examination broke through the concept of preferring the pen to the sword; Wuju is an important factor in the formation and development of Chinese martial arts. Wuju has explored many military talents for martial arts in various dynasties, also has promoted the development of folk sports activities and the spirit of national martial arts, and has formed a profound influence on national traditional sports.

5. Conclusion

For martial arts, the Wuju system which was set up in the Tang Dynasty has an epoch-making significance. The establishment of the Wuju system made the selection of martial arts talents in ancient China standardized and institutionalized, which provides the martial arts with the social development needs, and also enlarged the scale of martial arts. The establishment of the Wuju system has laid a foundation for constitution and development of martial arts in the Song Dynasty. It also has a pioneering significance in the development of martial arts.

The reason why the Wuju system has strong vitality is that through this system, a considerable number of military talents were discovered and cultivated for the rulers, which improved the military's combat effectiveness. It also has played a positive role on consolidating the centralization of power, safeguarding national unity and stability and resisting foreign aggression. Wuju changed the imperial examination system which think highly of liberal examination, and improved the social status of martial arts. To be an official through Wuju examination was regarded as the "right way", which inspired

people to practice the martial arts. This is the long-standing mass base of the Wuju system. However, the Wuju system has its limitations and class nature. It is established by the ruling class and must serve the ruling class. In a certain period of time, the Wuju system is negative, especially in the late feudal dynasty. The staleness is the reason why it is going to die. While we understand the Wuju system, we must see that its positive side and negative side. A comprehensive grasp of the Wuju system and understanding of Chinese martial arts have a high reference value for the selection and recruitment of military talents.

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