

Research into the Culture of Shadowboxing from the Angle of Art

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Abstract—Shadowboxing is an excellent kind of boxing in Chinese Wushu, and is widely known in the world for its unique movement styles and features. Shadowboxing is not just a kind of sport, but also an art and even a kind of culture. Shadowboxing practitioners both inside and outside China have a deeper understanding and knowledge of Chinese classic culture by learning and practising shadowboxing. In this paper, shadowboxing is studied from the angle of art, and the art features of shadowboxing are interpreted so that the world may know the connotation of shadowboxing more deeply, the taste about shadowboxing is improved, the world may understand the pursuit of art of Chinese classic culture better, and Chinese Wushu and Chinese classic culture may be widely promoted better.

Keywords—art; shadowboxing; culture

I. INTRODUCTION

In its long development process, Wushu has been deeply edified by Chinese classical aesthetics and shows thick national features and high aesthetic values. Wushu is represented not only in the aspects of art of attack and defense, bodybuilding and entertainment and such, but also the complex functions of art, performance and culture. Shadowboxing is an excellent type of boxing in Chinese Wushu, and its unique movement styles and cultural connotation are naturally integrated with Chinese classic culture. Shadowboxing is not only a kind of Wushu sport, but also an art and a kind of culture. People will have a better understanding and comprehension about Chinese classic culture while learning and practising shadowboxing, and it is good for improving the people's aesthetic values of shadowboxing, developing and promoting shadowboxing, promoting Chinese traditional culture so that more people know and practise shadowboxing, and taste the artistic beauty.

II. SHADOWBOXING IS A FORM OF ART

It is not difficult to find that art exists in a dynamic mode and is the product of history by thinking about the origin of art and its development course in combination of the modern art theories. Art is an expression of a certain feeling and will for arts by using certain images, forms and characters (beautiful); the genuine art shall be an expression of healthy feeling and will by using the beautiful images, forms and characters, embodying genuineness and kindness with beauty. Any behavior or thing that may express beauty can be called "art".

In Chinese classic, culture, piano, chess, calligraphy, painting, music and dance are arts familiar to the people. However, few people call Wushu in the treasure of Chinese culture as art. No one questions film as an art. In classic martial arts films, beautiful frames and stylish Wushu movements bring the feeling about the existence of Wushu as a kind of art. Chinese Wushu is widely known and developed due to Chinese films, and Chinese films are also popular in the world film circle due to Chinese Wushu. Wushu is an art behavior, whether for the purpose of performance or attack or defence, it is an expression of beauty and wise creation.

Shadowboxing is a kind of boxing that is representative in the heritage and development of Wushu, and is a treasure in Chinese Wushu. Tai Chi originates from the sentence, "Zhouyi includes Tai Chi, which generates two poles" from Zhouyi-Xici wherein Tai Chi means the highest, the greatest and unlimited. Shadowboxing is a kind of boxing in Chinese culture, and uses the broad profound thoughts from Tai Chi philosophy to understand the changeable fist positions of Shadowboxing, and the meaningful boxing theories. According to researches, shadowboxing was firstly practised in Chenjiagou, Wen County, Henan Province, and was created by Chen Wangting. During the long-term evolution and development, traditional schools with different styles and features were formed, including Chen-style, Yang-style, Wu-style, Sun-style shadowboxing, which are widely spread, representative with outstanding features. Although various styles of shadowboxing are different in strength, speed, structure, movements and others, they are also common, and have to following the same aesthetic elements.

Shadowboxing, as an art form, means objective existence that may inspire artists and is the most direct base for generating all the art forms. The prototypes of the movements of shadowboxing come from beautiful things in nature. Artists mean those who bring constructive thoughts and make contributions to shadowboxing. The works mean the forms to express shadowboxing. Viewers mean the audience. Shadowboxing is an art form including the element of the human body, and absorbs strength from nature, and forms beautiful shapes, which is based on a static state in combination with a dynamic state. Shadowboxing is in the symmetric balanced structure, and shows its proper beauty in order, beauty in strength focusing on temper force in combination with grace with rhythms changeable between

static state and dynamic state. Shadowboxing also has the practical values containing attack and defence theories and helps to develop the adaptability to be observant and alert. Besides, it also improves the practisers' realm of life, and affects the viewers' interests. The combination of beautiful costumes, music and instruments further strengthens the art effects of shadowboxing, and improves the expressive tension. The creation of shadowboxing includes the wisdom of Chinese martial artists, and shadowboxing is imparted from one to another, and keeps developing and improving. Through several years of practice, laborious and wise Chinese martial artists make unremitting endeavors and pass on shadowboxing from one generation to another.

III. EXPRESSION OF ART

Shadowboxing is an important type of boxing in Chinese Wushu, and is an important carrier of Chinese traditional culture. It is a character representing body movements, and expresses broad and profound cultural information. Many people have a full knowledge of Chinese culture by practising shadowboxing, and practising shadowboxing is one of the quickest and most effective ways to grasp the essence of Chinese traditional culture. Accordingly, it may also promote the spreading and development and improve the art charm of shadowboxing.

A. *Art base of shadowboxing-Posture of body*

Shadowboxing is a typical body art, and the human body plays a major role in expressing it. A normal human body consists of a trunk, two upper limbs and two lower limbs. The two upper limbs and two lower limbs are symmetrical to each other with the trunk as the vertical axis. The symmetrical anatomical structure represents the uniformity, harmony and modesty of human bodies. In the Boxing Spectrum, such a structure of human body is called "five body constituents", "five bone constituents" and "five muscle constituents". Shadowboxing is also called "five bows" as its movements include arcs everywhere. Five bows mean that the trunk, both arms and both legs which look like five bows when expanded. The basic skills of human bodies and shadowboxing are complementary to each other and promote each other. A beautiful body may improve the aesthetic effect of shadowboxing. A beautiful figure may be shaped by frequently practising shadowboxing. Besides shaping beautiful bodies by the movements and postures of shadowboxing, the frames including continuous dynamic and static states also show the meanings of attack and defence; and great attention is paid to bone methods and movement requirements, beautiful postures and others. While viewers appreciate the beauty of shadowboxing due to its solid basic skills and smooth movements, they can not help being astonished by how hard the practisers have worked to acquire such beautiful postures and smooth movements.

B. *Artistic expression of shadowboxing-structure of movement*

"Conquering the unyielding with the yielding" and "skillful deflection" show that shadowboxing is the product of people's wisdom. Shadowboxing features gentleness, slowness and its movements are continuous, both static and dynamic. The other movement follows immediately after the previous movement,

and the movements are joined up naturally and smoothly, and the whole body is well coordinated. The folded and unfolded postures of each movement may be considered static, however, both dynamic postures and static postures are typical postures in life. The beauty of the movement structure is shown in the subtle and reasonable assortment and arrangement of the parts of shadowboxing. The uniform, slow, soft and round movements of shadowboxing fully embody the aesthetic thoughts. Round is one of the most beautiful and integral figures. Shadowboxing is not fragmented, and also seems dynamic. Both the left hand and the right hand coordinate with each other to form round movements, and appear expanded, natural and unrestrained. While shadowboxing is created, great attention is paid to the continuity and integrity of the whole structure. Continuity means no break between movements or strength like flowing water, and the movements flow without break, seeming intangible, feeble, but changeable whenever necessary.

IV. ACCESSORY ART OF SHADOWBOXING

Exquisite accessories may help to improve the effect of shadowboxing, however, the accessories of shadowboxing such as music, costumes and weapons are all well-developed art forms with long histories, and are profound, increasingly refined with long-term development and is well integrated with the movements making the artistic effects of shadowboxing more outstanding and expressive.

A. *Shadowboxing suit*

Shadowboxing suit means the costume worn by practisers while practising and performing shadowboxing in order to make it convenient for them to practise and improve the aesthetic effects. Under the influence of the Chinese traditional folk costume culture, it features cape collar and double-breasted buttons; it is loose and comfortable, and mainly green, red, black, white and yellow. Along with the development of the shadowboxing trends, its originally simple suit becomes more complex, diverse, reflecting the designer's unique creative concepts. Under the influence of Chinese traditional culture, shadowboxing suit develops in parallel with shadowboxing, and the traditional features included in the shadowboxing suit will not change, neither cultural connotation of shadowboxing included will change, and the cultural connotation as a symbolic feature exists throughout the manufacturing of the shadowboxing suit. Indeed, shadowboxing suit may help to show the grace, naturalness and smoothness of the movements, and enhance its expressive force. Before the practisers start to practise, the shadowboxing suit brings a beautiful intuitive vision to the viewers. Simple and beautiful suits add a natural taste to the movements and bring a graceful, fresh and imperturbable temperament to the practiser, attracting the viewers immediately so that the viewers may watch shadowboxing performances more carefully, and may understand the connotation of the design of the performance. The shadowboxing suit plays an important role in the artistic performance of shadowboxing, and will be more refined and outstanding in aesthetic effects in future development. However, colorful Chinese costume culture makes it possible to improve the shadowboxing suit, and adds strength to it. In China with thousands of years of history of

civilization, where many groups who have integrated, developed and who have always enjoyed the reputation of The Kingdom of Dress, various styles and schools, exist together and contend, and have their own features. Plum blossom embroidery and hand-made dragons are also added to the shadowboxing suit, and give unique artistic effects to it. The increasing improvement of the shadowboxing suit also promotes the development of the shadowboxing performance.

B. Background music

Background music is the music selected to improve the performance effect. Music is an impressive form of art; visionary art is a rational art containing a big part of thought while auditory music stimulates our senses and moves us deeply, which is probably the reason that great importance was attached to music teaching in ancient China. The shadowboxing as a visionary art and the music as an auditory art are combined to set off each other and are integrated. Both shadowboxing and music have a long history, a broad connotation, and strong artistic appeals. The perfect combination sets off the artistic effects to be expressed by the creators better. Properly selected music can smartly set off the beauty of shadowboxing. There are two kinds of combinations of shadowboxing and music, namely, assorting shadowboxing with music, and assorting music with shadowboxing. A key principle must be followed while music is selected, namely, coordinating the rhythms of music with the rhythms of shadowboxing. While shadowboxing is performed gracefully, slow, airy and graceful music slowly flows into the ears. The music rhythms are seamlessly assorted with the gentleness and toughness, solidness and voidness expressed in the performance of shadowboxing so that viewers are deeply attracted. Shadowboxing as an excellent traditional national exercise of China and is assorted with music with Chinese national rhythms. Viewers may perceive the profound Chinese national culture by watching the performance of shadowboxing so that viewers not only enjoy an exciting visionary and auditory performance, but also become interested in profound Chinese culture contained in shadowboxing.

C. Weapons

Drilling with shadowboxing weapons is a unique art form formed in the long-term exploration and development of drilling with Wushu weapons. The weapons used in Wushu drilling have mainly evolved from the ancient weapons. Today, Wushu weapons are colorful, and called "Eighteen Weapons". Each weapon has its own features. Seen from the angle of art, they are artistically creative, and are the embodiments of beauty. Ancient Chinese created a series of skills and tricks from the skills and methods of shadowboxing and weapons, which they handed down. While drilling with shadowboxing weapons, human bodies wield the weapons freely by using attack and defence skills so that viewers may enjoy the beauty in the sword fighting and taste the profound Wushu culture. The series of skills and tricks including the combination of Tai Chi sword, Tai Chi hook, and Tai Chi fan with the footwork and body postures are greatly helpful for developing the form and constituents of shadowboxing.

V. CONCLUSION

Wushu culture is an important constituent in the national traditional culture, and shadowboxing is an important typical type of boxing in the heritage and development of Wushu in China. The internationalized development of shadowboxing over recent years allows foreigners to be open to Chinese culture. It is necessary for us to deeply research Chinese traditional culture and shadowboxing to lead the inheritance and development of the people's culture and also attract more foreigners to learn Chinese traditions.

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