

An Exploration of the Course and Impact of Sino-Japanese Sports Exchanges during the Late Qing Dynasty from the Perspective of National Sentiment

Yan Chen

Sports academy, Southwest University of physical education, Chongqing 400000, China

*Corresponding author email: 297257340@qq.com

Abstract

From the perspective of national sentiment, this paper conducts an in-depth investigation into the trajectory and impact of Sino-Japanese sports exchanges during the late Qing Dynasty. During this period, both China and Japan faced pressure from Western powers but pursued distinct developmental paths. Japan implemented comprehensive westernization, particularly through gymnastics education centered on military exercises, establishing a modern school sports system that enhanced public physical fitness and national consciousness. Following its defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War, China recognized the backwardness of its educational system and began emulating Japan by sending numerous students to study military affairs, education, and sports. Under these circumstances, Sino-Japanese sports exchanges unfolded amid nationalist tensions, embodying both the motivation to adopt Japanese sports techniques as a means of countering Western influence and a wary attitude toward Japanese cultural colonization. The exchange process evolved from initial contact in the late Qing era, through deepened interactions in the early Republic of China period, to complex interactions during the Beiyang Government and Nanjing Government periods. This process not only facilitated the establishment and refinement of China's sports education system but also fostered a sense of national self-strengthening and the idea of saving the nation through sports, promoting cultural exchange and mutual understanding in grassroots sports communities.

Keywords

Ethnic sentiment; late Qing Dynasty; Sino-Japanese sports exchanges; historical development.

1. Introduction

As an emerging branch of historical research, the history of cultural exchange is typically classified under the secondary discipline of history known as "specialized history," with its core focus on the historical processes of cultural interaction among countries and regions worldwide. Cultural exchange serves as a vital driving force for the progress and development of human societies and diverse ethnic cultures. Among the histories of international cultural exchanges globally, Sino-Japanese cultural exchange stands out particularly due to its rich diversity and long-standing tradition. Within the millennia-long spectrum of cultural interactions between China and Japan, sports cultural exchange—a unique form combining physical practice and spiritual identification—has gradually become a significant lens reflecting the evolution of national sentiments since the late Qing Dynasty. During the late Qing and early Republican periods, both China and Japan faced coercion from Western powers; however, their national sentiments and developmental paths diverged significantly. Japan pursued comprehensive Westernization, especially through gymnastics education centered on military

exercises, establishing a modern school sports system that enhanced public health and national consciousness. In contrast, after the defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War, China recognized the backwardness of its educational system and began emulating Japan by sending numerous students to study military affairs, education, and sports. Under these circumstances, Sino-Japanese sports exchanges unfolded amid nationalist tensions, embodying both the motivation to adopt Japanese sports techniques as a means of countering Western influence and a concurrent wariness toward Japanese cultural colonization.

In the study of cultural exchange history, Sino-Japanese sports interactions have long been marginalized as a branch of "technological dissemination." Most research focuses on the transplantation of sports systems. Wang Xiao systematically examined the introduction of Western modern gymnastics during the late Qing Dynasty from 1864 to 1911, revealing its developmental trajectory in military training and elucidating its significant impact on the advancement of modern military tactics, the enrichment of school curricula, and shifts in women's educational perspectives. However, no thorough investigation has been conducted into how the sentiment of "shame towards Japan" influenced institutional choices after the defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War. Regarding research on national sentiments, several theoretical frameworks have been established concerning late Qing-era Sino-Japanese sports exchanges and their impacts. Currently, mainstream and representative studies focus on the relationship between the evolving attitudes of China's intellectual circles toward Japan following the war and the reshaping of Chinese national sentiments. Li Dongxiang noted that after the First Sino-Japanese War, Chinese intellectuals' attitudes toward Japan shifted, sparking a wave of studying abroad in Japan, with notable figures including Lu Xun, Guo Moruo, and Zhou Enlai. In the field of sports, Chinese scholars' attitudes also evolved from "disdain" to "admiration" for Japan, manifested in Chinese students traveling to Japan for academic studies and adopting Japanese sports education, as well as Japanese physical education teachers teaching in China. According to incomplete statistics, approximately 500 Japanese coaches working at the Ministry of Internal Affairs from 1905 to 1906 formed a sports coaching team in China, playing a crucial role in establishing modernized sports institutions in China. Additionally, Japan further strengthened its influence over China by organizing military drill exercises. For example, in 1897 and 1898, the Qing dynasty was twice invited to hold large-scale practical training exercises in Beijing, and 15 senior officials from the Beiyang Army were permitted to observe the drills. On the surface, this initiative was justified under the pretext of rebuilding Sino-Japanese military exchanges; in reality, however, it aimed to infiltrate political intentions through military interactions. This dual approach—combining diplomatic goodwill with strategic deterrence—prompted academic circles to delve deeper into the complexity of national sentiments in modern Sino-Japanese relations. Sino-Japanese interactions were always accompanied by tensions of nationalism: as a nation sharing the same language and ethnicity and seeking to continue ruling the Qing dynasty, Japan became China's primary model during the late Qing period. A large number of Chinese students traveled to Japan to study military education and sports, while Japan itself participated in the reform of China's sports system. These sporting exchanges carried the motivation of "learning foreign techniques to counter other nations"—aiming to leverage Japan's enthusiasm for sports to advance education and modernization, while simultaneously remaining vigilant about Japanese civilization introduced to China due to the humiliation of defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War. This contradiction was particularly evident in sports education, where factors such as Japan's high teaching costs and the low proportion of sports professionals among Chinese students reflected competition between Japan and China over cultural identity and national interests. It is worth questioning how this complex mix of shame, anxiety, and hope shaped the trajectory of Sino-Japanese sports exchanges from 1895 to 1949, and how the introduction of military gymnastics and the practices of Chinese students studying in Japan influenced the construction of modern China's

national identity. Existing research has provided relatively comprehensive political and economic analyses of sports history, yet systematic investigations into the psychological mechanisms underlying national sentiments during this process and their bidirectional impacts remain scarce. Therefore, examining and evaluating Sino-Japanese sports exchanges in the late Qing period from the perspective of national sentiments not only reflects the core driving force behind China's modern reforms in physical education but also offers a new perspective for better understanding the cultural dynamics and interactions between China and Japan. This paper employs a literature review approach to analyze relevant documents on Sino-Japanese sports exchanges, exploring their connections with China's concepts of "militaristic civic education" and "warlike spirit," thereby revealing the functional mechanisms of physical education in the construction of China's modern nation-state. Additionally, by examining the contradictory emotions between cultural affinity identification and Japanese cultural colonialism fears, the study investigates the motivations and impacts of Sino-Japanese sports exchanges under the backdrop of national sentiments. This research contributes to reflecting on issues of cultural subjectivity in contemporary China's globalization of sports, provides historical references for developing a distinctive Chinese physical education system, and demonstrates through the historical evolution of Sino-Japanese sports exchanges that the dissemination of sports culture is invariably shaped by national and ethnic sentiments—a universal pattern that offers theoretical insights for modern international sports cultural interactions.

2. The motivations behind Sino-Japanese sports exchanges during the late Qing Dynasty from the perspective of national sentiments

2.1. Salvation-Oriented Approach: The Call for Sports-Based National Survival Amid Ethnic Crisis

In the mid-to-late 19th century, late Qing China faced multiple crises under the impact of powerful foreign navies and advanced weaponry. The system of unequal treaties led to the loss of sovereignty and territorial fragmentation, while massive war reparations exacerbated economic collapse. The defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War of 1895 further shattered the perception of the "Heavenly Empire." This war, launched by neighboring Japan, presented the brutal reality of a "small nation" defeating a "civilized ancient country," plunging the Chinese nation into an unprecedented crisis of identity. The humiliating label of "Sick Man of East Asia" not only reflected the weakness of national physical fitness under the traditional education system but also mirrored collective anxiety following the loss of cultural superiority. Since the Meiji Restoration, Japan had systematically adopted Western concepts of physical education, deeply integrating the "martial spirit" with modern sports instruction to establish a physical training system centered on "militaristic civic education." This model, which combined athletic practice with the construction of national spirit, translated into tangible combat effectiveness during the First Sino-Japanese War, profoundly impacting China's intellectual circles. Scholars studying in Japan witnessed firsthand the prosperity of school sports programs and the importance of physical education in enhancing public health and fostering patriotic spirit. Upon returning home, they vigorously advocated for reform, promoting new educational initiatives such as incorporating sports into curricula, aiming to leverage physical education to alleviate poverty and save the nation from peril. Zhang Zhidong noted in his essay "Encouragement of Learning": "A year spent studying abroad surpasses five years of learning Western texts," describing Japan as "China's Confucius" and positioning it as "the world of other nations." Its essence was to regard Japan as an intermediary vehicle for the dissemination of Western knowledge to the East. This approach not only reduced learning costs due to the cultural affinity between China and Japan—shared language and heritage—but also aimed to achieve the

salvation-oriented logic of "strengthening the body, fostering patriotism, and safeguarding the nation" by emulating Japanese physical education. From this perspective, a large number of Chinese students studying in Japan took courses in Western military science, education, and sports, hoping to enhance national physical fitness and bolster citizens' courage to save the country. This reflects a patriotic sentiment centered on saving the nation through its people, which served as the primary motivation for China's sports exchanges with Japan from the late Qing Dynasty through the Republican era.

2.2. Emulation Approach: Recognition of and Active Introduction of Japan's Physical Education System

After the First Sino-Japanese War, China's attitude toward Japan underwent a fundamental shift, transitioning from traditional "disdain" to active "emulation," manifested in China's conscious absorption and systematic imitation of Japan's modern sports education model. During the Meiji period, Japan adopted Western educational ideas while integrating them with its own national culture. In 1879 (the twelfth year of Meiji), Japan established a specialized sports research institution and teacher training center—the Gymnastics Training Institute—and conducted Japan's earliest modern survey on student physical fitness through this institution, demonstrating its high emphasis on the scientification and institutionalization of school sports. The core objectives of Japanese school sports were defined as enhancing students' physical health, improving motor skills, fostering teamwork spirit, and skillfully incorporating nationalist ideology into teaching practices, aiming to cultivate students' national pride and sense of national mission through physical exercise. This sports education model has proven effective, not only promoting the physical well-being of the Japanese people but also laying a solid foundation for military and economic development. Facing a crisis of national survival, the Chinese nation began to take Japan's school sports education model seriously.

After the Meiji Restoration, Japan rapidly established a modern school sports system through military gymnastics, which served not merely to enhance the combat capabilities of the national army but also to cultivate collective consciousness and patriotic sentiment among citizens through school sports education. The First Sino-Japanese War demonstrated the remarkable effectiveness of this approach. Chinese scholars visiting Japan conducted investigations and analyses focusing on Japanese school sports, concluding that its institutional design was meticulous, teaching methods were flexible and diverse, and teacher training programs were robust—leaving a profound impact on the Chinese people. They observed that our traditional "dogmatic" education system overly emphasized Confucian classics while neglecting physical training, resulting in weak physical health, insufficient national pride, and diminished competitiveness among citizens. Consequently, they strongly recommended adopting Japanese sports education concepts to reform our outdated educational model. Upon returning home, these scholars actively engaged in practical educational work, establishing new schools with innovative sports programs, introducing physical activities into classrooms, hiring Japanese sports instructors, and utilizing Japanese sports textbooks and methodologies. Some new schools even offered specialized sports courses, encouraging student competitions to stimulate interest and improve skills. By embracing Japanese sports education principles, China gradually developed a modern school sports system, fostering healthy physical fitness and contemporary sports awareness among its citizens. During the late Qing Dynasty, Chinese society gained a deeper understanding and acceptance of Japan's sports education approach. Chinese students studying in Japan gained a profound understanding of the completeness and practical effectiveness of Japan's school sports education system through their firsthand experience in physical education classes. Particularly, military gymnastics demonstrated its role in fostering students' discipline, teamwork spirit, and physical health. Upon returning to China, these students actively introduced Japanese sports education concepts, leading to the incorporation

of Japanese gymnastics, military gymnastics, track and field events, and other sports into China's school curriculum. Furthermore, under Japan's "protection policy," the Japanese authorities proactively dispatched physical education teachers to teach in China, facilitating the rapid dissemination of Japanese sports teaching methods. The recognition and emulation of these methods by Chinese educators during the late Qing Dynasty manifested not only in the adoption of specific sports programs but, more crucially, in a reevaluation of educational objectives: sports were seen not merely as a means to enhance physical fitness but also as a vital pathway for cultivating national spirit and civic awareness.

2.3. Emotional Tension: The Interplay and Adjustment Between National Sentiment and the Interest in National Self-Strengthening

National sentiment and public welfare have always been closely intertwined, forming a complex interplay. On one hand, from the perspective of national sentiment, China and Japan share a long-standing historical connection: in China's early history, Japan was profoundly influenced by Chinese culture, while China continuously contributed culture and technology to Japan. However, with modern developments, Japan rapidly rose to prominence through the Meiji Restoration and defeated China in the First Sino-Japanese War, which was a profound humiliation for the Chinese people as descendants of Huaxia, severely undermining their national self-esteem and confidence. Against this backdrop, the Chinese people harbored deep resentment and vigilance toward the Japanese while simultaneously acknowledging their advancements in certain areas and admiring their expertise in physical education and sports instruction. This group of dedicated individuals, driven by patriotism and the desire to save the nation, advocated adopting Japanese-style physical education methods to cultivate citizens for China's salvation—a measure taken out of necessity. Nevertheless, from the standpoint of public welfare, the Qing government encountered numerous challenges in implementing concrete measures for promoting sports exchanges. First, conservatism domestically opposed emulating Japan, viewing it as a "barbaric country" and advocating preservation of traditional Chinese institutions, even proposing bans. Second, amid escalating global changes and increasing foreign threats and interventions, China had to balance its efforts in learning Japanese physical education with safeguarding national sovereignty and independence. For instance, when sending students abroad for physical education training, considerations must be given to the number, purpose of study, and intended use upon return, ensuring that these efforts benefit the homeland rather than serving Japanese interests. Third, based on considerations of their respective national interests, China and Japan have differing objectives in sports exchanges. This inherent divergence in interests makes it difficult for the two sides to achieve full coordination in cooperation, thereby inevitably leading to strategic negotiations and setbacks for China in learning from and adopting Japan's sports model.

From this perspective, although the late Qing government highly endorsed the Japanese educational system, a profound tension between national sentiment and national interests consistently permeated Sino-Japanese sports exchanges. First, the national humiliation resulting from the defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War made Chinese officials wary and skeptical of introducing Japanese culture. They sought to achieve a utilitarian goal—learning from Japan's strengths to counter foreign threats—through sports education, implementing "educational reform" based on Japanese models to enhance national power and strengthen resistance against external aggression. However, such learning was by no means a complete Westernization; it was always infused with a national sentiment aimed at preserving cultural identity and dominance. Second, Japan pursued its sports reforms in China primarily by dispatching instructors, conducting missionary activities, and promoting physical education, all driven by the objective of safeguarding national interests rather than genuine goodwill. Thus, the fundamental conflict between national sentiments and national interests inevitably led to

complex entanglements in Sino-Japanese sports relations. Moreover, China's desire to learn from Japan while fearing cultural invasion was evident in various aspects of sports education, such as excessively high salaries for Japanese sports instructors and insufficient numbers of Chinese students studying sports in Japan—both phenomena reflecting the interplay between cultural and national interests between the two nations.

3. The Historical Evolution of Sino-Japanese Sports Exchanges in the Late Qing Dynasty from the Perspective of National Sentiments

3.1. The Late Qing Period: Initial Exposure and the Emergence of National Identity (1895–1911)

The First Sino-Japanese War ended in China's defeat, shattering the Qing government's dream of being an imperial superpower. The Chinese people developed an unprecedented sense of crisis and a demand for reform. At this time, Japan, being both a neighboring country and a cultural neighbor, had advanced more rapidly in modernization than China, naturally becoming a key focus of China's attention. Consequently, some enlightened officials in the Qing court, led by Empress Dowager Cixi, began actively seeking ways to emulate Japan. Among these efforts, education, as a core national matter, naturally became the target of reform, and sports, as an essential component of education, likewise became an object of reform.

From 1896 until the Qing Dynasty began sending its first group of students to Japan, this period marked the formalization of sports exchanges between China and Japan. During this time, some Japanese individuals interested in physical education received systematic and professional Japanese-style sports training, including military physical education, general physical education, as well as various ball games such as basketball and football. Through these experiences, they broadened their horizons and gained a strong understanding that sports contribute to improving national health and fostering teamwork spirit. Upon returning home, they became the main force behind China's sports reforms, vigorously promoting Japanese sports concepts while establishing new schools, designing sports curricula, and actively introducing Japanese sports disciplines like military physical education and general physical education into Chinese schools. In response to China's policy of "protecting the Qing Dynasty," Japan dispatched numerous physical education teachers to China to teach sports courses. These teachers not only possessed exceptional athletic skills but also indirectly disseminated Japanese ideas on sports philosophy and management practices to China. Although during this phase, Sino-Japanese sports exchanges primarily focused on technology transfer and institutional borrowing, Chinese scholars began consciously recognizing and taking pride in the sports elements within their own cultural heritage. They emphasized that "sports serve not only as a means and medium for healthy living but also as a vital pathway for shaping national identity and uniting national strength." Thus, despite potential degrees of identification with or reliance on Japanese culture during the learning process, Chinese scholars maintained their cultural hegemony and actively pursued the development of a unique sports education system.

3.2. The Early Republic Period: Deepening Cultural Exchange and Intensified National Sentiment (1912–1927)

During the Republican era, with the advent of political and cultural reforms and movements, sports exchanges between China and Japan deepened in both content and scope. During this period, the number of Chinese students studying in Japan continued to grow, particularly in sports-related fields. They not only devoted themselves to researching Japanese sports techniques and management systems but also actively participated in Japanese sports organizations, establishing extensive connections with professionals in the field. The sports philosophies and practices of prominent figures during the late Qing revival period were

notable: Zhang Zhidong and others advocated implementing "military-civilian" education in modern schools, incorporating gymnastics into the 1898 educational curriculum—a move that aligned with adopting Western modern sports while reflecting aspirations to enhance national physical fitness for resisting foreign aggression. Additionally, influenced by national crises, civilian martial arts organizations flourished. Although the Boxer Rebellion's "martial arts groups" had limitations, they demonstrated the public's desire to utilize traditional sports for national salvation. These grassroots sports initiatives contrasted with government-led institutional reforms, highlighting how national sentiment could drive systemic innovation through sports engagement, yet also revealing challenges posed by excessive conservatism that hindered cultural exchange. Scholars argue that the Qing government's attitude toward Japanese military training evolved from superficial participation during the 1897 "Showa Friendship Initiative" to genuine learning through observation in 1898, reflecting both a resurgence of national pride after humiliation and an overreliance on the Japanese model under survival pressures.

Upon returning to China, these sports professionals who studied in Japan became a pivotal force in the reform of China's physical education system. They established numerous sports colleges domestically, trained a large number of physical education teachers, and actively participated in the development of sports curricula and curriculum innovation, thereby advancing the modernization of China's physical education. They also introduced competitive sports regulations to China, organized sporting events and activities, and enhanced public enthusiasm and participation in sports. However, alongside the rise of nationalist sentiments, conflicts in Sino-Japanese sports exchanges have intensified: firstly, while learning from Japanese approaches to physical education, they began questioning the limitations of the "learning from Japan" model, fearing that excessive reliance on Japan might undermine China's national identity; secondly, Japan's overly aggressive actions and territorial invasions in China sparked strong resistance and opposition among the Chinese people. Consequently, nationalist sentiments in Sino-Japanese sports exchanges grew even more pronounced. Meanwhile, Chinese sports professionals, while actively drawing on Japanese experiences, placed greater emphasis on cultural innovation and integration, aiming to develop a distinctive Chinese model of physical education. At the same time, they actively engaged in global sports exchanges and sought opportunities for collaboration and mutual benefit with other countries, broadening their perspectives and enhancing their competitiveness.

3.3. From the Beiyang Government to the Nanjing Government Period: Complex Interactions and National Awakening (1927–1949)

During the period from the Beiyang Government to the Nanjing Government, Sino-Japanese sports exchanges underwent a more complex and tortuous development. Throughout this era, Sino-Japanese relations experienced repeated cycles of tension and easing, turning points and renewed confrontations, and correspondingly, Sino-Japanese sports exchanges also progressed with considerable difficulty. Although the number of sports majors among Chinese students studying in Japan fluctuated, their overall cohort remained relatively substantial; they continued to introduce cutting-edge sports concepts and techniques from Japan and, upon returning home, contributed to the advancement of China's sports development. Meanwhile, civilian-level sports interactions between China and Japan intensified. Mutual visits and exchanges in modern sports disciplines such as table tennis, basketball, and football became routine practices, which not only enhanced athletic skills but also fostered mutual understanding and friendship between the peoples of both countries. Of course, when Japan launched its invasion of China, Sino-Japanese sports exchanges were forced to cease, and sports became a tool for war propaganda and national competition.

During this period, China's sports sector operated under unique developmental circumstances. On one hand, it bore the responsibility of countering the negative impacts and decline in status caused by Japan's aggression against China's sports culture and dominant culture, safeguarding national honor, and consolidating its leading position; on the other hand, it seized this opportunity to actively learn from the excellent experiences in sports development worldwide, accelerating the growth of the domestic sports industry. Throughout this process, we witnessed the profound patriotic sentiments and the relentless spirit of progress inherent in the Chinese nation, which manifested through active participation in the resistance movement for national salvation, treating sports as a form of freedom for the nation and its people. Additionally, practical efforts were made to explore a sports development path suited to China's context, drawing on the sporting experiences of global technological leaders while actively organizing and revitalizing local traditional culture. This sense of national awakening and self-strengthening not only facilitated the rapid advancement of China's sports endeavors but also laid a solid foundation for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

4. The Impact of Sino-Japanese Sports Exchanges in the Late Qing Dynasty from the Perspective of National Sentiments

4.1. Intellectual Enlightenment: The Rise of National Self-Strengthening Awareness and the Sports-Based National Revival Movement

The relationship between the national sentiments of the late Qing Dynasty and Japanese sports greatly stimulated the enhancement of China's self-rescue consciousness and gave rise to the concept of utilizing sports as a means for national and ethnic salvation. The First Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895) represented a crucial opportunity for China's national awakening and revitalization. The defeat in this war served as a profound shock to the entire national spirit, with all social strata in China acutely aware of the country's poverty, backwardness, and inadequate military strength. Witnessing Japan's rapid development while their own stagnation, the nation's sense of national confidence and determination to prevail was significantly strengthened, leading to new approaches for national and people's self-rescue.

It is evident that under this context, sports have been endowed with a new mission in the modern era due to their crucial role in enhancing national quality and fostering a wartime spirit. A group of China students studying in Japan not only acquired advanced concepts in military, political, and economic fields but also enthusiastically embraced Japanese educational philosophies and methods. Through research, they discovered that Japan's rapid modernization since the Meiji Restoration was primarily attributed to the role of physical education. Drawing lessons from Japan's curriculum design, teaching methodologies, and management systems for sports, these scholars came to recognize the significance of physical education. Upon returning to China, these military students actively promoted militarized education, emphasized the power of warfare, and exerted a profound influence on the modernization of Chinese sports at the time. They established sports academies, published sports textbooks, and participated in various athletic competitions, putting into practice their philosophy of revitalizing the nation through sports. For instance, reformers such as Cai E and Jiang Baili, whose military education during their studies in Japan was shaped by militarized principles, vigorously advocated the idea of revitalizing the nation through sports upon their return. They believed that enhancing national cohesion and strengthening the country's power could be achieved solely through sports.

The proposal of the concept of "salvaging the nation through sports" not only heightened public awareness of physical education and promoted its development, but also, under the influence of this philosophy, integrated the concept of physical education into China's national education system, gradually forming a modern framework for physical education. Furthermore, sports

have become a vital bridge connecting people's minds and a primary vehicle for fostering patriotic sentiments, providing fresh impetus for China's social transformation and progress during the modern era.

4.2. Institutional Framework: Initial Development of a Localized Physical Education System

The sports exchanges between China and Japan during the late Qing Dynasty played a crucial role in promoting the establishment and continuous improvement of China's sports education system. As personnel interactions between China and Japan became increasingly frequent, China began to emulate Japan's sports education system and gradually developed a sports education framework tailored to its national conditions.

After the Meiji Restoration, Japan successfully modernized its physical education system, attracting numerous Chinese students studying in Japan as well as Japanese physical education teachers who implemented Japanese educational philosophies and methods in China—including extensive learning and imitation across various aspects such as curriculum design, textbook selection, and teaching approaches. For example, Japanese military gymnastics (also known as military exercises) and daily gymnastics were introduced into China and made mandatory courses in schools at all levels. The implementation of these courses focused not only on students' physical development but, more importantly, on fostering their moral character, representing a revolutionary and advanced approach compared to traditional Chinese physical exercise practices. Secondly, China adapted the imported physical education curriculum system to suit its national conditions. In terms of curriculum design, traditional sports disciplines such as Tai Chi were incorporated, endowing the curriculum with cultural significance while broadening its scope. Additionally, teaching methodologies emphasized personalized instruction combined with practical applications of theoretical knowledge, enhancing both the effectiveness and quality of physical education. Physical education initiatives also contributed to the establishment of a standardized physical education system in China. Drawing on Japanese practices in physical education, China began developing nationally unified physical education standards and curricula, clarifying teaching objectives and requirements, and establishing training and evaluation systems for physical education teachers to improve their pedagogical competence.

These reforms not only promoted the development of sports education in China but also laid a solid foundation for advancing the future development of China's sports sector. Through sports exchanges with Japan, China gradually established a modern sports education system, providing robust support for nurturing a new generation of talents with contemporary thinking and broad vision.

4.3. Interactive Dynamics: Deepening Cultural Exchange and Mutual Understanding in Amateur Sports

From the perspective of Chinese national sentiment, the integration of sports between China and Japan during the late Qing Dynasty served as a vital bridge for cultural exchange between the two countries and a significant force in fostering deeper mutual understanding of mass sports cultures. Despite numerous differences and frictions between the two nations in political and economic spheres during this period, the exchange of sports culture between their peoples flowed like an unceasing river between the people of China and Japan, laying a solid social foundation for mutual recognition and friendly interactions.

First, from the mid-Qing Dynasty to the early Republic of China period, Sino-Japanese sports interactions deepened the Chinese people's identification with Japanese sports culture and their respect for Japan. As Japanese sports spread throughout Japan and East Asia, our country actively absorbed and introduced Japanese educational and athletic practices. International

students served as a crucial channel for cultural exchange between the two nations; they not only brought Japanese sports disciplines such as gymnastics and judo to China but also translated Japanese sports literature and established sports schools, thereby fostering the integration of sports cultures between the two countries. These efforts further strengthened the Chinese people's identification with Japanese sports culture and their admiration for Japanese sports, sparking a nationwide enthusiasm for exploring opportunities for sports reform. Civil-level exchanges fostered emotional understanding and resonance in Sino-Japanese sports relations. During this period, people-to-people diplomacy through modern sports activities like table tennis, basketball, and football became increasingly prevalent—not merely as a means of skill demonstration or exchange but also as a significant bridge to bridge the psychological gap between peoples and enhance mutual goodwill and trust. For instance, the outstanding performance of the Chinese women's basketball team in Japan not only dispelled the stigma of being labeled the "Sick Man of East Asia" but also ignited enthusiastic responses among the Japanese public, fostering greater respect and affection for the Chinese people. Such emotional resonance born from sports exchanges played a vital role in the development and stability of Sino-Japanese relations. Additionally, sports exchanges between China and Japan facilitated mutual learning and integration in terms of sports education philosophies and athletic spirit. Students studying in Japan not only acquire advanced athletic skills and sports teaching methodologies, but also develop exemplary qualities inherent in the Japanese sporting spirit, such as tenacious willpower and teamwork. The adoption of these qualities and principles in China has played a pivotal role in advancing the nation's physical education system, guiding its development toward greater scientific rigor and standardization. Furthermore, China's unique cultural heritage and appeal within the sports domain are showcased to the Japanese public, fostering exchange, integration, and mutual enhancement between Chinese and Japanese sports cultures.

From the perspective of both ethnic sentiment and cultural identity, Sino-Japanese sports intertextuality during the late Qing Dynasty played a pivotal role in fostering integration and mutual understanding of folk sports cultures, enhancing mutual familiarity, promoting recognition and respect for each other's sports traditions, and cultivating emotional resonance among people—thereby laying a solid popular foundation for Sino-Japanese relations. It also facilitated the exchange and integration of educational philosophies and sporting spirits between the two countries, injecting new vitality into their respective sports development efforts.

5. Conclusion

The sports exchanges between China and Japan during the late Qing Dynasty, amidst the complex interplay of national sentiments, exerted profound impacts on China's sports culture and even society as a whole. On one hand, by drawing inspiration from Japan's sports education model, China gradually established a modern sports education system, improved the physical fitness of its citizens, strengthened national cohesion, and laid the foundation for the rise of the concept of revitalizing the nation through sports. On the other hand, the nationalist sentiments inherent in these exchanges prompted China to uphold cultural autonomy while absorbing foreign influences, striving to develop a sports education model with distinct Chinese characteristics. Furthermore, sports served as a bridge for cultural exchange, fostering mutual understanding and friendship between the peoples of China and Japan, thereby providing a grassroots foundation for the peaceful development of bilateral relations. However, it must also be acknowledged that the intertwined dynamics between national sentiments and national interests have made these exchanges far from smooth, with underlying cultural conflicts and interest disputes that cannot be overlooked. Therefore, while reviewing history, we should

reflect more deeply on the issues of cultural security in China's current process of sports globalization, learn from historical lessons, and promote healthy exchanges and development of sports culture.

References

- [1] Lü, S. C. (2021). Review and prospects of research on Sino-Japanese cultural exchange history during the Qing Dynasty in China's academic circles. *East Asian Studies*, (00), 219-251.
- [2] Teng, J. (Ed.). (2011). *History of cultural exchange between China and Japan: Examination and research*. Peking University Press.
- [3] Liu, D. Y., & Ma, X. G. (1993). *Dictionary of Sino-Japanese cultural exchanges*. *Japanese Studies*, (1), 98.
- [4] [Author unknown]. (2023). Reflections on future youth sports programs: Proceedings of the 73rd Annual Conference of the Japanese Society of Physical Education, Sports, and Health, organized by the society's headquarters. *Collected Papers of the Japanese Society of Physical Education, Sports, and Health*, 73(S), S2-1-S2-37.
- [5] Wang, X. (2021). *Research on the introduction of Western modern gymnastics during the Late Qing Dynasty (1864-1911)* (Master's thesis). Chengdu Sport University.
- [6] [Author unknown]. (Undated). *The development of higher education in China and the current state of Sino-Japanese educational exchanges*. [Unpublished manuscript].
- [7] [Author unknown]. (2023). 2022 Annual Meeting of the Sports Sociology Specialized Group of the Japanese Society of Sports, Physical Education and Health: Report on specialized group activities for 2022. *Annual Report on Sports Sociology*, 4, 103-140.
- [8] Feng, T. Y., & Jiang, H. L. (Trans.). (2016). Chapter on encouraging learning. *Zhonghua Book Company*.
- [9] Liu, C. Y., & Tan, H. (2014). The cornerstone of modern school physical education in Japan--Gymnastics Training Institutes. *Journal of Physical Education*, (2), 104-108.
- [10] Wang, F. (2017). *Studies on modern Sino-Japanese sports relations* (Master's thesis). Soochow University.
- [11] Hamada, Y. (2017). The emergence of Metia Olinhics in Japan: Report presented at the 67th Annual Conference of the Japanese Sports Society's Specialized Field Sports History Symposium, "The Emergence of Metia Olinhics in Japan – Viewing Olinhics from a Historical Perspective (2)". *Sports History Research*, 34(0), 57-64.
- [12] Li, D. X. (2007). Development of higher education in China and the current state of Sino-Japanese educational exchanges. *International Japanese Studies*, 4, 137-151.
- [13] Ding, Z. P. (2016). *Research on the history, contributions and development prospects of sports exchanges between China and its neighboring countries* (Master's thesis). Chengdu Sport University.
- [14] Wu, Y. L. (2015). *A comparative study on the legal framework for school physical education in China and Japan* (Master's thesis). Chengdu Sport University.
- [15] Du, W. C., Yin, Z. H., Wang, X. Z., & Wu, P. (2014). A comparative study of physical education curricula between China and Japan. *Sports Culture Journal*, (12), 138-141.
- [16] Pan, H. (2009). A review of 60 years of Sino-Japanese sports exchanges. *Journal of Chengdu Sport University*, 35(10), 5-8.