

STUDIES IN PHYSICAL CULTURE AND TOURISM
Vol. 17, No. 1, 2010

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**MODERN GAMES AND COMPETITIONS OF THE NORTHERN MULTIATHLON
AS PEDAGOGICAL HERITAGE OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF RUSSIA**

Key words: traditional games, Northern Multiathlon, Ural, Siberia.

ABSTRACT

Indigenous peoples of Russia have been benefiting for a long time from their unique and invaluable traditional games and competitions in physical training of their children in extreme climatic conditions of the North. The educational use of these games and competitions has been particularly common among the peoples of the Ural Mountains and Siberia.

At present, traditional games and competitions have been transformed into a modern sports event called the Northern Multiathlon. By the decision of the Russian Federal Agency on Physical Training, Sports and Tourism, the Northern Multiathlon Federation was established headed by Chairman A.V. Nazarov and General Director O.V. Dolumadzhanova. On November 21-25, 2006 the Federation organized the All-Russian Northern Multiathlon Championships in Zavolzhie in the Nizhny Novgorod area. Eleven teams from different autonomous regions and republics of the Russian Federation (Khanty-Mansiysk, Yamalonyenetskiy, Taymir, Evenki, Chukchi, Yakutia, Tatarstan, Sverdlovsk, Nizhny Novgorod) took part in the event.

INTRODUCTION

The Northern Multiathlon is a technically difficult sport contest consisting of five events: *tinzhayn* throwing, cross-country run with a staff, axe throwing, standing triple jump and jumps over the *narti*.

METHODS

The study was carried out by a research team of teachers and students of the Faculty of Physical Training of the Russian State University in Ekaterinburg led by the Dean of Faculty Valery Krasilnikov. The team members took photographs

and videorecorded the Northern Multiathlon events in order to create extensive research documentation.

RESULTS

Tinzhayn throw

The *tinzhayn* (lasso in the Khanty language) is a reindeer leather rope plaited from several thin belts 0.5-1 cm thick and about 25 m long. A *tinzhayn* has a small fixed plate made of deer bone through which the rope passes to form a loop. Four deer hides are used to manufacture a single *tinzhayn* rope [1].

Tinzhayn throwing competitions can take place on any flat ground with a 3-meter pole

erected in the middle of a circle with the radius of 15 meters. The tinzayn is thrown onto the pole from any place outside the circle (Fig. 1). The tinzayn throwers must comply with several rules of competition. Each player must possess his own rope and has three throwing attempts. The players throw their tinzayns on referee's command. A throw must be executed within two minutes. After each throw the rope must be retrieved by the thrower to the area outside the throwing circle within three minutes.



Figure 1. Tinzayn throwing

Cross-country run with a staff

In this event the competitors run over a specified distance (3 km, 2 km and 1 km depending on participants' age) in a country terrain (forest footpaths, dirt road, tundra) carrying a staff 130 cm long and at least 1 cm thick of any weight. The staff can be made of metal, duralumin, wood or any other material. The runners are forbidden to wear shoes with track spikes [1].

Axe throw

The axe throwing competition takes place on a 60 m-long pitch with a runway at least 20 meters in length (Fig. 2). The axe should weigh no less than 350 grams. Each participant is allowed to make three throwing attempts and the best result of the three throws is noted down. The competitor with the longest single legal throw wins. A throw must take place on referee's command, with a run-up, before a designated throw line on the ground, and the thrower may not leave the throwing area until the axe lands on the ground.



Figure 2. Axe throwing

Standing triple jump

Standing triple jump involves three phases. During each phase a competitor must jump from a two-footed stand and land on both feet. The winner is the competitor who achieves the longest distance on one of the three attempts. Each jump is made on referee's command marked by lifting of a white tag [2].



Figure 3. Standing triple jump

Jumps over the narti

Each competitor performs a series of jumps through ten *narti* (wooden sled models) set in one line. The jumps are made from a two-footed stand. Each sled model is numbered and must not be moved during jumping. After having run over ten *narti* the competitor must turn around within five seconds and return to the starting line by jumping over the *narti*. Each competitor has three attempts. The referee stops a run once a jumper makes a mistake, e.g. touches a *narti* or removes it from its position. The winner is a competitor who runs over biggest number of the *narti* within a single run [3].



Figure 4. Jumping over the *narti* (wooden sled models)

DISCUSSION

The conducted study allowed us to make a projection into the future (40-50 years) regarding the influence of different factors on the development of the northern regions of Russia, and the formation of cultural heritage of its indigenous populations. At present the processes of urbanization and subsequent assimilation of the indigenous peoples of Siberia into modern Russian society as well as extensive development of petroleum, gas and chemical industries have largely resulted in the loss of their national cultures. It is necessary to preserve and propagate the development of physical culture among the native communities of Russia and avoid the errors of the past. In the long term, in view of depletion of fossil fuels and emergence of alternative energy sources the northern territories of Russia will be declared natural preserves and constitute the natural habitats of the mentioned indigenous peoples. Ecological food production as well as reindeer breeding will be necessary to maintain the vital activities and trades of these peoples such as manufacturing of deer leather, souvenirs, and traditional clothing. New designated tourist routes in those areas are supposed to bring a number of profits to the local residents.

In these new economic conditions traditional physical exercises will serve as the means of association of native cultures from different regions. Thanks to the preservation of the indigenous games and competitions of northern Russia the traditional reindeer and horse riding races, reindeer and dog sled races, rope throwing competitions, jumping through sleds, bow and arrow shooting, axe throwing, running with a staff, will never be lost to the posterity. Present-day “extreme sports modifications” such as snow-storm races or winter automobile rallies in impenetrable areas of the taiga or tundra may also bring some benefits to the local communities. On the international level the traditional sports of the native Siberian populations should be included into the programmes of global sports festivals and gain endorsement from national educational and public health authorities.

It is important that the traditional games and contests should become the vital link between the culture of the past, present and future of the native Siberians.

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