

МІНІСТЕРСТВО ОСВІТИ І НАУКИ УКРАЇНИ



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ІV ВСЕУКРАЇНСЬКОЇ НАУКОВО-ПРАКТИЧНОЇ КОНФЕРЕНЦІЇ З МІЖНАРОДНОЮ УЧАСТЮ «АКТУАЛЬНІ ПИТАННЯ ФІЗИЧНОГО ВИХОВАННЯ, СПОРТУ, ЗДОРОВОГО СПОСОБУ ТА ЯКОСТІ ЖИТТЯ РІЗНИХ ВЕРСТВ НАСЕЛЕННЯ»

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ХОПАК AND COMBAT ХОПАК IN THE CONTEXT OF UKRAINE'S DEVELOPMENT

Introduction. Ukraine's rich cultural heritage is deeply intertwined with its traditional arts, among which Hopak holds a prominent place. Originating as a Cossack dance, Hopak reflects the bravery, resilience, and communal values of the Ukrainian people. Over time, this vibrant dance has evolved beyond entertainment into a symbol of national pride and cultural expression. Combat Hopak, a modern adaptation combining traditional movements with martial arts techniques, has emerged as both a sport and a method of self-defense that preserves Ukrainian traditions while addressing contemporary needs. In the context of Ukraine's ongoing social and political development, understanding the role of Hopak and Combat Hopak provides valuable insights into how cultural practices contribute to nation-building, identity reinforcement, and community empowerment.

The purpose of the research: to analyze the roles of Hopak and Battle Hopak in the development of Ukraine by examining their historical roots, cultural significance, and contemporary applications, how these art forms influence national identity, contribute to cultural continuity, and support social cohesion in modern Ukraine.

Research methods: theoretical analysis and generalization of scientific and methodological literature.

The content of the main research material. Starting from 2000s the concept of Sport for Development has gained great importance. Sport for Development is an international movement that presents sport as a means for reaching different social and humanitarian missions (for example, education, social cohesion, health, reintegration, diplomacy, peace and other objectives) [5].

On 3 November 2003, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a resolution, called «Sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace». It emphasized the role of sports in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (the Millennium Development Goals are eight global goals set by the United Nations) [4; 6]. As the Sport for Development concept started to grow, more specialists got interested in investigating this trend. In particular, several key areas of this movement were highlighted. Let's take a look at them (table 1).

Table 1

Main areas of the «Sport for Development movement»

Direction	Descriptions
Sport and disability	This branch focuses on the role of sports in inclusion and complying with the human rights of people with disabilities
Sport and education	This direction highlights the importance of sports for education advancement. Rather than focusing on sport education, it emphasizes the role of physical activity in achieving academic and social outcomes
Sport and gender	The given section helps to exclude inequity between men and women thanks to involving people into sports activities
Sport and health	This branch highlights the influence of sport on the mental and physical health of individuals and the society as a whole
Sport and livelihoods	It focuses on opportunities to use sport in order to improve the livelihood of underprivileged people by providing free trainings, rehabilitation and so on
Sport and peace	This branch considers sport as an instrument for providing peace in communities, between people, ethnic groups and others
Sport and social cohesion	It emphasizes the role of sport in the cohesion of different social groups, contribution to the community integration and, therefore, the development of our society

How can Ukraine contribute to the «Sport for Development» concept, positively influencing the global community and itself?

Obviously, the «sport and peace» direction is the most relevant for Ukrainians today. Since 2014, Ukrainians have been fighting not only for the state borders, but also for sovereignty and the world's acknowledgment of Ukrainian culture as a unique and separate phenomenon, different from the Russian culture.

The image of the native culture should be well-defined. To achieve a goal, it must first be defined. To defeat the enemy, Ukrainians need to understand what they are fighting for. That is why it is important to investigate the culture and take care of its preservation by following traditions, speaking the same native language, informing people about their history and so on. The online platform UNESCO states that «intangible cultural heritage can only be heritage when it is recognized by the communities, groups or individuals who create, maintain and transmit it...» [7].

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This research proposes one way that can be a start of a powerful and impressive development campaign. And this way is the documented recognition of hopak and combat hopak as the intangible cultural heritage of Ukraine.

Why is hopak not just a dance, but a real martial art? Because hopak is not an ordinary dance. It served as a kind of warm-up, during which key combat techniques were practiced: lightning speed, powerful punches and kicks, strong stance and tactical thinking. Over time, hopak, disguised as a dance, as a martial art went far beyond the borders of Zaporizhzhia Sich.

Hopak is a Ukrainian folk dance. The name of the dance comes from the verb hopaty (to jump, to bounce). The dance is mostly improvisational [3]. It appeared among Zaporozhian Cossacks and in ancient times hopak was a martial dance of priests that had a special meaning for them, but now it is just a national dance, a set of movements. Hopak is performed by the National Honored Academic Dance Ensemble of Ukraine named after Pavlo Virsky (fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Hopak

Deciphering some elements of hopak, Ukrainian martial arts researcher Volodymyr Pilat created such a sport as combat hopak [2]. In turn, the bill approved by the people's deputies created a separate category of national sports in Ukraine, one of which is combat hopak (fig. 2). Now it is officially recognized as a national sport in Ukraine [1].



Fig. 2. Combathopak

Every native Ukrainian knows hopak from childhood, so the recognition of this cultural element within the community cannot be doubted. But when looking at the official list of the Ukrainian elements of intangible cultural heritage on the website

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of the Ministry of Culture and Strategic Communications of Ukraine, we can see neither hopak nor combat hopak in this document. It is definitely a big problem. If we don't recognize it as our heritage, then how will other nationalities?

Taking this into account, a combat hopak should be approved as an intangible cultural heritage as soon as possible. Its spread will contribute to the sport's development and spread around the country. Some people may question its necessity. But the importance of sport development and popularization in a country can't be doubted.

In order to have more possibilities for recognition within large communities and further development it is crucial for sports to be recognized by official institutions. In the case of approval of hopak and combat hopak as the cultural heritage, clubs and committees of the mentioned dance and sport will be given more legal and financial support to organize various competitions across Ukraine more often and will get many other opportunities. It will definitely lead to the spread of the dance and combat hopak among Ukrainians.

The popularization of hopak and combat hopak will surely contribute to the strengthening of Ukrainian culture, patriotic upbringing of youth and increasing the physical activity of the country's population. This approval will also provide wide opportunities for exhibition of the national sport and dance on the international stage and popularization of Ukrainian culture among other nationalities. The combat hopak may also be used for military training.

We will describe and compare the research on Hopak and Combat Hopak in the context of the development of Ukraine, with an emphasis on their cultural, historical and martial aspects, as well as comparisons with other martial arts.

Hopak, traditionally known as a vibrant Ukrainian folk dance, has deep historical roots associated with the Cossack culture of Ukraine. Over time, this expressive dance evolved into a martial art form known as combat hopak, which combines traditional movements with practical self-defense techniques. The study of hopak and combat hopak offers valuable insight into Ukraine's cultural identity, national pride and the development of indigenous martial arts. This study explores the characteristics of hopak and combat hopak, comparing them with other world martial arts, to highlight their unique contribution to the socio-cultural and physical education landscape of Ukraine.

Hopak: Cultural and Historical Context.

Originally performed by Cossack warriors as a celebratory dance after battle or during festivals, hopak embodies agility, strength, and rhythm. It combines acrobatic leaps, kicks, and squats, symbolizing combat readiness and warrior spirit. Although the dance's movements are primarily artistic, they have an inherent combat application that laid the foundation for the formalization of combat hopak.

Combat Hopak: The Development of a Combat System.

Combat Hopak emerged in the late 20th century as an attempt to preserve Ukrainian combat traditions while adapting them for modern self-defense

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and military training. It combines striking, grappling, weaponry, and combat tactics inspired by Cossack warfare. The system emphasizes fluidity, adaptability, and the use of natural body mechanics borrowed from traditional dance movements.

Comparative Analysis with Other Martial Arts.

1. Combat Hopak vs. Karate (Japan):

– Karate focuses on discipline, spiritual development, and precise striking techniques, while Combat Hopak emphasizes adaptability and practicality on the battlefield, rooted in Ukrainian heritage;

– Karate uses linear strikes and kata (forms), while Combat Hopak uses circular movements and dynamic movements inspired by folk dance;

– both serve as national symbols; Karate is a global sport, while Combat Hopak remains more regionally focused on preserving culture.

2. Combat Hopak vs. Capoeira (Brazil):

– Capoeira combines African martial arts with dance and music, similarly, Combat Hopak combines dance with martial arts;

– both types use acrobatic and rhythmic movements, however, Capoeira combines continuous flow with deception, while Battle Hopak emphasizes combat effectiveness along with artistry;

– Capoeira was historically a form of resistance among enslaved people, while Battle Hopak revives the traditions of Cossack warriors to develop a national identity.

Research highlights that Combat Hopak contributes to:

– strengthening Ukrainian cultural identity through physical education;

– providing effective self-defense skills based on national history;

– strengthening community cohesion by promoting traditional values;

– maintaining psychological resilience through disciplined training.

Comparative studies show that while Combat Hopak shares commonalities with other martial arts that combine dance and combat (e.g., capoeira), its specific historical context and cultural symbolism make it unique in the world martial arts landscape.

Hopak and Combat Hopak are more than just physical disciplines; they embody Ukraine's historical struggle, cultural resilience, and the development of national identity. In the context of Ukraine's development, these practices serve as vital tools for cultural preservation and modern self-defense training. Compared to other martial arts in the world, hopak combat stands out for its combination of folk art with pragmatic combat techniques, offering a rich blend of tradition and innovation.

Thanks to the approval of combathopak as a part of Ukrainian non-material heritage, our country will be able to join several directions of Sport for Development movement at once. Let's take a look at these directions:

1. Sport and education.

Doing combathopak will help people learn the history of this sport and, accordingly, the history of Ukraine, its traditions and much more.

2. Sport and health.

Obviously, studying combathopak will increase the level of physical activity among Ukrainians, will contribute to strengthening mental and physical health and improve the general well-being of our people.

3. Sport and social cohesion.

The understanding of belonging to one culture, having the same traditions and history with other people will lead to better social cohesion among Ukrainians. The hopak has always been a symbol of power, victory, so by remembering about these roots and motives Ukrainians can be inspired by the ancestor's spirit for overcoming new challenges they meet as a nation.

4. Sport and peace.

Although hopak dance is not a sport, it includes numerous movements that require significant physical training and the mastery of technique (as a combat hopak was created out of the hopak), so we can definitely speak about it as a kind of sport in this research. Thus, obviously, we can claim the same contribution of the hopak dance into the «Sport for Development» movement, as combat hopak may have (including all four directions we have looked through above).

Conclusions. The confirmation of hopak and combat hopak as elements of intangible Ukrainian intangible cultural heritage will have a huge positive impact not only on Ukrainians, but on the whole world as well. Because following the «Sport for Development» concept shows the political maturity of a country, its great importance for the world community and helps to get more respect and recognition from the other nationalities.

Prospects for further research consist in the investigation of other ways to promote different national Ukrainian sports among Ukrainians as a means of positively influencing the achievement of both global and national Ukrainian goals.

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