

# The Practical Significance of Zhu Ting as China's First Female Olympic Flag-bearer

Yuxin Liu<sup>1,a</sup>, Libo Shi<sup>2,b</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Physical Education School of Shaanxi Normal University, Xi'an, Shaanxi, 710119, China

<sup>2</sup>Guangzhou Panyu District Tianyun Primary School, Guangzhou, Guangdong, 511400, China

<sup>a</sup>LYX0706kaka@126.com, <sup>b</sup>13403430907@163.com

**Abstract:** *On the eve of the Tokyo Olympics, Zhu Ting was appointed by the Chinese Olympic delegation as one of the flag bearers for the opening ceremony. This is the first female athlete in the history of the Chinese Olympics to serve as the flag bearer for the opening ceremony. It is of great significance. Women's volleyball is the only group event of China's three major balls that has won an Olympic championship. The spirit of women's volleyball represented by it is a full manifestation of the Chinese national sports spirit and the sports spirit of the new era. The flag bearer at the opening ceremony represented the image of the country and showed the spirit of the country. Zhu Ting became the first Chinese Olympic flag bearer, not only promote the Olympic concept of equality between men and women, but also interpret the image of the new women's volleyball team that is united and tolerant. It has also become an important history node in enhancing the voice of Chinese female athletes.*

**Keywords:** *Olympic Games, Olympic concept, Female volleyball sports, Voice*

## 1. Introduction

In order to promote the idea of gender equality in the Olympic Games, International Olympic Committee President Bach said at a press conference in March 2020 that the Tokyo Olympic Games had sent a key signal to the world about gender equality by encouraging each team to send one athlete of each gender to carry the flag. In delay at the Tokyo Olympic Games for the first time, the international Olympic team choose to adopt common men and women as the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games flag, for example: Rui HACHIMURA Japanese man basketball player, and women's wrestling athletes suzaki uniqllo as a flag bearer will lead the Japanese delegation composed of about 600 athletes at the opening ceremony; Australia also announced the selection of Spurs' Mears and swimmer Cait Campbell, a four-time Olympic flag bearer for the first time; The South Korean women's volleyball team captain Kim Ru-kyung and 18-year-old swimmer Hwang Sun-woo served as the flag-bearer in the opening ceremony. As a famous volleyball player in South Korea, Kim Ru-kyung was also the world's top scorer. In the 2012 London Olympic Games, she led the mediocre South Korean women's volleyball team to the final four, creating the volleyball history of South Korea's women's volleyball team. In addition, as the host country of the Tokyo Olympics, Japan has for the first time named a male and a female team leader, sprinter Ryota Yamagata and table tennis player Kasumi Ishikawa. At the opening ceremony on July 23, 2021, Ryota Yamagata and Kasumi Ishikawa will take the oath on behalf of the athletes. It was also the first time in Olympic history that two athletes, one male and one female, completed the event together. The above examples are all examples of countries implementing the Olympic concept of gender equality. The Chinese delegation also actively responded to the initiative of President Bach by choosing Zhu Ting (volleyball) and Zhao Shuai (Taekwondo) as the flag-bearers for the opening ceremony. Zhu Ting, the world's first female main player, was selected to the national Women's Volleyball team by Lang Ping after she took charge of the National Women's Volleyball Team in 2013. She also tried her best to teach Zhu Ting all kinds of volleyball skills. Lang Ping also carefully taught Zhu Ting psychological problems. In the end, Lang developed her into an excellent athlete and built a Chinese women's volleyball team with Zhu as the attack core. In the 2016 Rio Olympic Games, Zhu Ting took the responsibility as the captain of the Chinese Women's Volleyball team and scored 158 points with a success rate of attack of 49.84%, the number of individual attacks accounted for 35.46% of the whole team, the score of individual attacks accounted for 40.51% of the whole team, and the efficiency value of 42.27%. She led the Chinese Women's Volleyball team to win the gold medal in the 2016 Rio Olympic Games. She was crowned the MVP and the best playmaker.

## 2. Promote the idea of gender equality in the Olympic Games

To promote the idea of gender equality in the Olympic Games, International Olympic Committee President Bach said at a press conference in March 2020 that the Tokyo Olympic Games had sent a key signal of gender equality to the world by encouraging each team to send one athlete of each gender to carry the flag. Following President Bach's initiative, the Chinese delegation chose Zhu Ting (volleyball) and Zhao Shuai (Taekwondo) as the co-flag-bearers for the opening ceremony.

In the long history of the world, women, as the disadvantaged group in history, have long been excluded from the door of sports dominated by men and represented by the Olympic Games, and their right to participate in sports has been ruthlessly deprived. Women's liberation promotes women's participation in sports, and the development of women's sports further pushes women's liberation. This is a two-way historical process. In the late 19th century, feminist sports organizations appeared, and promoted women to start the Olympic Games in the early 20th century. In 1924, the eighth Paris Olympic Games finally passed the provisions allowing women to participate in the Olympic Games. The Olympic stage provided a broad road for women to enter the international sports stage. The inclusion of women in the Olympics marked the beginning of their role in the international community. From women's tennis, golf to swimming athletics gymnastics and so on gradually become the Olympic Games. Based on the idea of "completely eliminating gender differences", Western competitive women strongly proposed and demanded equal participation rights. Subsequently, the International Olympic Committee decided that women's sports should be included in the Olympic Games before they could be considered. The women's 800-meter race was also included, as was women's volleyball, the first women's team event at the Olympics and by far the most noticed of the three events.

On the contrary, the development of Chinese women sports is a long and arduous process. Chinese women have long been influenced by the thought of male domination, which makes the women's liberation movement still dominated by men in essence. It is attached to the general environment of national development, rather than initiated by women<sup>[1]</sup>. But fortunately, in the initial stage of the rise of Chinese sports, women started to compete almost at the same time as men, and there was no significant gap in the number of them. From the perspective of participation, Chinese female athletes were ahead of western female athletes. For example, the first Constitution promulgated by the People's Republic of China in September 1954 clearly stipulates that "Women in the People's Republic of China enjoy equal rights with men in all aspects of political, economic, cultural, social and family life."<sup>[10]</sup> The 1949 to 1978 is a period of time for the development of sports in China. Under the environment of vigorously implementing the idea of equality between men and women and sharing equal rights with everyone and opposing feudal conservative concepts, the state proposes to strengthen the people's physique as the basic task for the development of sports. The women's social sports in China are actively developing in cities, rural areas and the army. After going through the difficult stage, they cherish the hard-won opportunity to participate in sports more. After the normal development of the country, they began to participate in sports with the support of the national policy, and have made gratifying achievements.

Since the 1980s, many outstanding female athletes have emerged in China, such as Yaping Deng, Mingxia Fu and Junxia Wang, as well as the five consecutive women's volleyball championships that inspired Chinese people the most, and the social status of Chinese female athletes has been greatly improved<sup>[6]</sup>. With the continuous improvement of the degree of socialization, Chinese female competitive athletes have gradually become the mainstay of Chinese competitive sports, and continue to bring the performance of female athletes to a new height in the world. Compared with the Western female sports "bottom-up" form of liberation, Chinese female sports is "top-down", which has been paid full attention to by the state. The development of Chinese and Western female sports is not only reflected in the equality of participation rights, but also reflected in the equality of the number of male and female athletes.

Chinese and Western female athletes strive for equal participation in sports and strive to defend the dignity of female sports, which promotes the improvement of competitive sports level, constantly plays the unique role of women in the international environment, spreads the Olympic culture and carries forward the Olympic concept of gender equality<sup>[4]</sup>. Take the Chinese Olympic delegation as an example, after the restoration of China's legal Olympic seat in 1979, 87 of the 225 Chinese athletes in the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games were female athletes, accounting for 39% of the total, at the 1996 Atlanta Games, 199 out of 309 athletes, or 64%, were women, in the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games, there were 188 female athletes, with the proportion rising to 66 percent, in the 2016 Rio Olympic Games, the number of female athletes reached 256, accounting for more than 60 percent, in

the Tokyo Olympic Games, there were 431 female athletes and 298 female athletes in the Chinese delegation, with the widest gender gap ever.

In addition to the number of participants, around the world of women continue to pursue equality in sports participation, but also in the participation of the same events, promoting the Olympic Committee to carry out the program reform, and further promote the development of gender equality in sports. In the early 1970s, 《Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972》, a landmark act that officially established equal participation of men and women in sports, explicitly allowed gender segregation in competitive sports<sup>[1]</sup>, women are excluded from sports that are typically competitive, such as basketball, rugby, ice hockey and soccer. With the world's feminists led by the West working together to eliminate gender segregation, legal instruments represented by the Ninth Act and the Equality Protection Act (UK) Amendment have become the "patron saint" of women's equal participation in sports. Since the 1970s, women have been given the right to participate in many events, such as: the 20th Munich Olympic Games added women's 1500m race; The 21st Montreal Olympic Games added women's basketball; The women's 3000m race and marathon of the 24th Seoul Olympics were also included.

In modern sports, women have been participating in competitive sports represented by the Olympic Games for less than one hundred years, but they need to face the constraints of traditional culture represented by Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan on women's rights and dress to participate in competitive sports, change the unequal treatment of women in sports, and use the power of sports to change the culture affecting gender inequality. To promote gender equality, the road is really difficult. But only by sticking to it can female athletes stand confidently on the sports stage, give play to their excellent competitive ability and enhance their influence.

Promoting equality between men and women is an important goal in the development of China's sports cause. Zhu Ting, as the first Chinese female flag bearer in the Olympic Games, not only promotes the spirit of the women's volleyball team, but also highlights the Olympic concept of equality between men and women, and carries forward the unique determination and unyielding spirit of Chinese female athletes in the international arena.

### **3. It is a long way to go to improve the voice of female athletes**

It is undeniable that in the 21st century, with the rapid development of politics and economy around the world, the field of sports is still dominated by men and essentially belongs to the field ruled by men. "Men refuse to recognize women's right to enjoy all fruits of human civilization, to relieve women's burden, to improve her conditions, and to refuse women's physical and psychological quality to be free and fully developed" [9]. Pierre de Coubertin, the father of the modern Olympics, believed that the Games were a men's arena and explicitly disapproved of the participation of women in competition. Foucault once proposed that the body and the discourse are twins, the body is endowed with meaning by the discourse, and the discourse is the expression of the power of the body<sup>[2][7]</sup>. Therefore, men naturally hold the dominant power in the field of sports, and their discourse power is based on it.

Feminists have worked hard to write "equal participation of men and women in sports" into the law, but with the development of modern competitive sports, the lack of female discourse power has gradually emerged<sup>[5]</sup>. Among the members of the International Olympic Committee, the IOC has not had a female member for more than 80 years since its establishment, until 1981, this situation was broken, two women became the first female members of the IOC. So far, the proportion of female members has increased significantly, but it has not reached 50 percent. In the Olympic Games, In the 2015 Asian Games in Incheon, South Korea, the Qatari women's basketball team was sent off by the referee for wearing a scarf. Unfortunately, in competitive sports that advocate the concepts of "gender equality" and "fair play", some behaviors disregard women's sports rights. The referee, as the referee of a game, is not only responsible for the outcome of the game, but also the "spokesperson" of the principle of fairness and justice in competitive sports. The referee ruled Qatar women's basketball team out just because they wore a scarf on their heads. This is a serious violation of the spirit of equal play<sup>[8]</sup>. Shahkani, a female judoka who made her Olympic debut for Saudi Arabia, was told by the judges that she would not be allowed to wear a hijab during the competition or she would not be allowed to compete. After investigation, the International Judo Association did not have a clear definition of this before. The Asian Judo Association allows Muslim female athletes to wear the headscarf in order to respect religious customs, but such a decision by the referee seems "out of place" in the competitive arena of the modern Olympic Games. Try to ask, as an international competition as a single event

referee should not be familiar with the rules of the competition? No respect for women? Shouldn't religious practices be respected? In February 2021, Yoshiro Mori, a member of the Japanese Olympic Organizing Committee, complained in a meeting that "meetings with women present are too long", and therefore suggested limiting the time that women can speak at the meeting. This behavior was strongly criticized and protested by all parties, and eventually the committee member resigned and apologized for the discriminatory behavior. If such officials continue to serve at the Tokyo Olympics, it will cast a shadow over the Olympic ideals of gender equality. In the final analysis, or female athletes in the field of competitive sports discourse power is insufficient or even lack.

Looking back at the history of China's Olympic Games, female athletes' power of competitive sports is as weak as their participation in sports. From 1984, when China officially returned to the Summer Olympic Games, to 2016 Rio Olympic Games, there were seven flag bearers for the opening ceremony were all men. It was the first time that a woman athlete was chosen as the flag bearer in Tokyo Olympic Games. This is a historic breakthrough, but it also makes us reflect on why a woman athlete was chosen as the flag bearer in Tokyo Olympic Games. Have there been no outstanding female athletes since 1984? No, we have a series of outstanding players in different times, such as Lang Ping, Yaping Deng, Yining Zhang, Guo Jing, Yang Yang, etc., but the reason why they never became the flag-bearer, besides objective factors such as training and competition schedule, is essentially that Chinese feudal society placed male power in the central position, and men were endowed with more power and respected. Women are dominated, and the idea of "men are inferior to women" has long been formed and reflected in the field of sports. With the continuous development of Chinese sports, female athletes are growing in scale and achieving excellent results in international competitions. More and more female athletes devote themselves to developing female sports and serving in international sports organizations after their retirement, such as Shengrong Lv, Yaping Deng, Yang Yang, etc. It is the trend of The Times and the general direction that women's right to speak in international sports should still be promoted. Therefore, it is imperative and a long way to go to improve female athletes' right to speak, and it is also the new goal and direction of the deepening reform and development of the Olympic Games.

#### **4. Show the new image of the Women's Volleyball team with unity and tolerance**

The 138th plenary session of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) voted on July 20 to add "more United" to the Olympic motto "Higher, Faster, stronger". "Together" not only means that people participate in sports and the Olympic Games together, but also highlights the significance of "one spirit, the whole world shoulder the responsibility".

Volleyball is a competitive team sport. It requires the six players on the court to support and trust each other. The substitutes are always on standby and cheer for the players on the court. In the game, each position of the players has its indispensable significance of existence, each player should rotate clockwise according to the rules, not only to assume the task of attacking the ball in the front row, but also to rotate to the back row for defense and reception, any attack and defense need every player to go all out. From winning the "five consecutive gold MEDALS" in the 1980s, to winning the Olympic gold medal in the Athens Olympic Games after 11 years, to winning the gold medal in the 2016 Rio Olympic Games, the spirit of the Chinese women's volleyball team has always inspired the Chinese people. Zhu Ting, also known as the successor of Lang Ping, has led the Chinese women's volleyball team back to the top level in the world. In the 2016 Rio Olympic Games, the Chinese women's Volleyball team once fell behind in the single score against the Japanese team. With Zhu Ting's words of "take it back", the morale of the whole team was thoroughly encouraged and inspired the fighting spirit. It was the spirit of unity and common commitment of the whole team in such a difficult period that the team finally won the match; in the quarterfinals, when facing the host Brazil, the Chinese women's volleyball team staged a spectacular turnaround, once trailing by a large score of 0:2. In the third round, the whole team showed the attitude of daring to fight and shock the opponent, relying on the indomitable spirit in the heart, finally won the host 3:2 and entered the final. This is a very historic match in the history of women's volleyball, the Chinese women's volleyball team relied on the spirit of unity and unyielding to help them win the match and continue their journey in the Olympic Games. The image of the unity of the women's volleyball team is not only reflected in the field, but also in the construction of the unity culture within the team. Lang Ping put forward the concept of "Great national team" after taking over the national team under the guidance of Lang Ping, expanded the selection range, expanded the depth of the bench, created a "super substitute" team [3], and adhered to the principle of "no fixed starters, only the best starters". The author believes that unity is the soil of the Chinese Women's volleyball team, which not only gives birth to the new image of the Chinese women's

volleyball team, but also the basis of their struggle in the competition.

People are not omnipotence, the competitive state will not always keep in the best level, there will be bad in the process of the game. No blame or a word of encouragement from a teammate may be a shot in the arm when some players make mistakes or are not in good shape. When an offensive player was stopped or made a mistake, or when a back row player missed the ball, other players would say, "Come again," or "the next dunk." Instead of blaming their teammates for their mistakes, they would comfort and encourage them. For example, the World Women's Volleyball League just ended in July 2021, and the Chinese Women's Volleyball team sent a group of new players to train. At the beginning of the match, the free player Mengjie Wang was not in a good defensive state. Many balls that should have been raised were not raised or not in place, which made it difficult for the setter to organize counterattack tactics. However, his teammates did not criticize or complain, but encouraged Mengjie Wang to catch the next ball. He made a number of great saves in the focal game against Brazil and was praised by everyone.

Unity and tolerance are interdependent and complementary. It is because the Chinese Women's Volleyball team is a unity division and surrounded by the atmosphere of unity that the players can understand and tolerate each other. On the contrary, it is because of the mutual tolerance and tolerance among the players that the Chinese Women's Volleyball team becomes more united and more harmonious in the competition, so that everyone's competitive level can be fully demonstrated. As the first Chinese female flag bearer in the Olympic Games, Zhu Ting presented the new image of unity and tolerance of the Chinese Women's Volleyball team to the world, fully demonstrating the spirit of the new China's Women's volleyball team.

## 5. Conclusion

The aim of the Olympic Games is: "without any discrimination or marginalization, with the Olympic spirit -- to educate youth through mutual understanding of sports in the spirit of friendship, solidarity and fairness, with the aim of contributing to the building of a peaceful and harmonious world" [4]. In the eyes of the Chinese people, the Olympic opening ceremony flag bearer is a sacred and solemn task, he represents the national image, show the national spirit. The spirit of Chinese women's volleyball team has long gone beyond the scope of competitive sports itself. Zhu Ting, as the first Chinese female flag bearer in the Olympic Games, not only carries forward the Olympic concept of equality between men and women, but also interprets the new image of unity and tolerance of Chinese women's volleyball team. It is also an important historical point to improve the voice of Chinese female athletes and a concentrated embodiment of the sports spirit of the Chinese nation.

## References

- [1] Yang Xue. *Research on Women's Liberation in Chinese Competitive Sports [D]*. Shanghai: Shanghai Institute of Sport. 2016.
- [2] Xiaozhi Li. *Inspiration of Foucault's Body Thought to the Study of Sports Sociology [J]*. *Sports and Science*, 2012, 33(1):24-27.
- [3] Bingshu Zhong, Li Nan. *Women's Volleyball Spirit and Sports Culture [J]*. *Journal of Chengdu Physical Education University*, 2020,(46)2:5-7.
- [4] Fanmin Kong. *Study on Olympic Culture [M]*. Beijing: People's Sports Publishing House, 2005: 171-202.
- [5] LIAO Li. *On the Discourse Power of International Competitive Sports [D]*. Changsha: Hunan Normal University. 2014.
- [6] MA Liang. *Contribution and Influence of Contemporary Chinese Women Sports on Olympic Movement [J]*. *Journal of Shenyang Physical Education Institute*, 2006,(25)4:15-17.
- [7] Shouzhong Zhang, Li Yuan. *Loss and Construction of female discourse power in Competitive Sports from the perspective of Gender Difference [J]*. *Nanjing: Journal of Nanjing University of Physical Education*, 2015, (29) 4:11166-120.
- [8] Jingshu Chen, Min Jian. *Body, Power and Sports Participation from a feminist perspective [J]*. *Sports Science*, 2014, (34)7:12-14,48.
- [9] Carla Henderson. *Female Leisure -- A Feminist Perspective [M]*. Kunming: Yunnan People's Publishing House, 2000:40.
- [10] China National Net. *The constitution of the People's Republic of China (1954) [EB/OL]*. [Http: www.npc.gov.cn/wxzl/wxzl/2000-12-26/content\\_4264.htm](http://www.npc.gov.cn/wxzl/wxzl/2000-12-26/content_4264.htm).